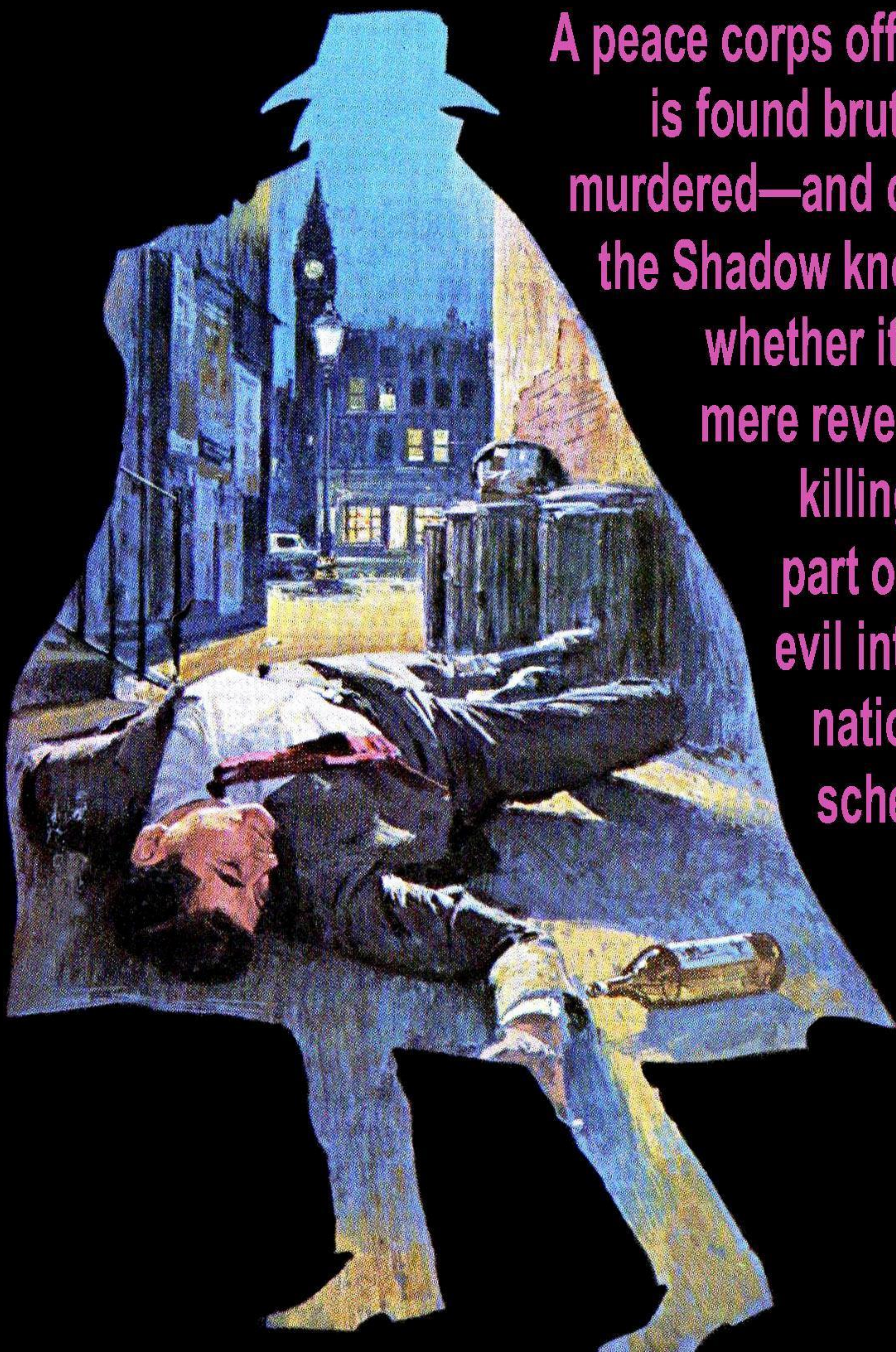


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A peace corps officer
is found brutally
murdered—and only
the Shadow knows
whether it's a
mere revenge
killing or
part of an
evil inter-
national
scheme



The only living occupant

of the morgue walked toward the row of cabinets. As he turned he raised his eyes and froze where he stood.

*A figure was bent over an exposed corpse!
A giant, shadowy, batlike figure.*

The great bat seemed to fill the end of the aisle, its black wings shrouding the corpse as it bent over as if to suck the last blood from the dead.

The attendant opened his mouth to scream; instead found himself pierced by two glowing eyes that seemed to burn through him and paralyze him. The black shape towered above him, enveloped him within its black wings. Then the great shape appeared to vanish. Suddenly the attendant could not see the shape, could not be sure he *had* seen it. His legs gave way. He slid slowly to the floor.

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Maxwell Grant

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NEW YORK CITY

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The alley was dark. A long tunnel of darkness opening onto the dim and narrow slum street in a thin cold rain.

Inside the alley tiny claws scraped the ancient cobblestones, and beady little eyes alertly watched an indistinct figure that stood hidden on the far side of the street. The rats were wary. Only a solitary street lamp cast its thin feeble glow on the dim street, and the careful rats could not tell whether the figure across the street was male or female.

The figure wore a dark voluminous coat and hat. Rats scurried for safety to their hidden lairs as a dog sidled into the alley to root among the garbage cans. The figure waited.

A black Cadillac appeared at the corner of the street to the right of the dark alley mouth. The Cadillac's lights blinked on and off once. The waiting figure moved across the narrow street and entered the alley and stood just behind a door that opened into the alley halfway to the blank rear wall.

Five minutes passed.

The door into the alley opened.

A long path of light from the opened door slanted like a sudden gash across the dark of the alley.

A tall man stood in the light of the opened door. He wore a buttoned and belted trenchcoat, and carried a small suitcase. His face was deeply tanned, and his alert eyes looked right and left. He walked four slow steps out into the alley along the path of light from the doorway behind him. The door closed and the path of light suddenly vanished. The tall man turned toward the waiting figure who had just closed the door.

"Have you got it?" the waiting figure said.

"Safe and sound," the tall man said.

The figure who had been waiting stepped toward the tall man with his hand extended in greeting. The two indistinct shapes came together, both arms extended to shake hands.

For an instant they blended into a single dark shape. Then there was a low, muffled explosion.

The tall man fell silently.

The figure that had been waiting, the killer, bent down over the fallen tall man. The killer pulled open the trench-coat and the suit coat beneath, hastily, without unbuttoning either coat. Then he straightened, took a flask from his coat pocket, and poured an amber liquid over the fallen man. He returned the flask to his pocket and continued his hasty search. He removed the fallen man's shoes. He dropped them in the rain. He began to swear. Still swearing softly, the killer turned to the small suitcase.

The door into the alley once again began to open slowly. As the light slashed the alley the killer grabbed the suitcase and faded into the night.

A small man came cautiously into the alley from the opened door. He glided to the fallen man, sniffed the air, and looked off into the dark of the alley listening. Then he bent over the fallen man who was still faintly breathing. The small man began to search. Feeling something, he jerked back and his small eyes seemed afraid. He tore two rings from the fallen man's fingers and walked quickly back through the door which closed behind him.

Minutes passed.

From the dark another figure approached the fallen man. It was the killer returning. Once more the killer searched swiftly, swore, and picked up the fallen man's shoes. He worked over the shoes for a moment, and then put them back onto the feet of the fallen man.

Then he was gone.

In the alley the fallen man lay in the rain. Soon he no longer breathed. He lay with his dead face turned up to the falling rain, his dead mouth open, his eyes staring sightlessly up to the dark sky.

He lay there for hours. Nothing moved. The rats remained hidden. The dead man lay coldly in the rain.

1

ON THE COLD nights of a London winter the wind blows the rain from the East off the angry North Sea. It blows the huddled people through the dark and hidden places of the old city, whips the rain-swept streets, and rattles high windows in the silent houses. There are sudden laughs in the darkened alleys, and, sometimes, screams. Then there is silence again away from the bright main streets, and old paper blows down wet gutters.

Hidden away behind the ancient face of the great city there is a large room where there are neither screams nor laughter. A shadowed place where the wind and the rain never reach, and the few solitary footsteps echo loud in the silence. This is the morgue.

On this winter night, the rain whipping outside, the only living occupant of the morgue dozed at his desk. The ring of the telephone shattered the silence. Jerked awake, the attendant rubbed his eyes and grumbled aloud to himself. For a moment he complained aloud to the silent corpses hidden in their rows of cabinets. Then he picked up the receiver. His manner became official.

"Yes sir," the attendant said. "Immediately sir. Paulson? Yes, I'll have him ready. Yes sir!"

The attendant hung up. He turned to a thick card file in front of him. His shoulders relaxed.

"Bloody stupid cops," the attendant muttered aloud. "Can't leave a man to do his work."

He continued to talk aloud, with no answer from the hidden corpses who were his only companions in the dim room, as his fingers searched through the cards. At last he extracted one card, looked at it, picked up his keys, and stood up. He left his desk and walked down the rows of cabinets until he reached the third cross row. He turned into the cross row, still mumbling to himself.

As he turned he raised his eyes. He froze where he stood.

At the far end of the row one cabinet had been pulled out. In the feeble light of the single overhead lamp that lighted the long aisle between the cabinets, a figure was bent over an exposed corpse.

A giant, shadowy, batlike figure.

The great bat seemed to fill the end of the aisle, its black wings shrouding the corpse as it bent over as if to suck the last blood from the dead.

The attendant opened his mouth to scream.

The scream never came. His mouth open, the attendant found himself pierced by two glowing eyes that seemed to burn through him and paralyze him. He saw the eyes and a sharp, hawklike nose fixed on him from beneath the dark brim of a wide slouch hat. He tried again to scream, to turn, to move and run, but he could do none of those things. He felt his will drain away, his body go limp, his mind become hazy and clouded as if the dark mist of the city itself had crept into his fogged brain.

He brushed his hand across his eyes, his clouded brain trying to remember what it was he had wanted to do. He blinked, and the giant, batlike figure seemed to grow until it filled the entire aisle. He became aware of a glowing, red stone that blazed with an inner light on a finger of the great black figure. The black shape towered above him, enveloped him within its black wings. Then the great shape appeared to vanish. Suddenly, as he had looked at the ring and the glowing eyes, he could not see the shape, could not quite remember what it had looked like. He was not sure he had seen it. His legs gave way. He slid slowly to the floor.

Silently, the batlike figure, that had not vanished at all, glided along the aisle to stand over the prostrate figure of the attendant who appeared to be asleep now but was really neither asleep nor awake. For a long second The Shadow stared down at the fallen man. Then he turned and moved soundlessly back to the corpse he had been bending over. The Avenger's piercing eyes stared at the unmoving body of the man who lay now forever silent on the morgue slab. The Shadow scrutinized every inch of the corpse.

The body was that of a well-built man of about thirty, Caucasian, an inch over six feet tall, and muscular. The man had been shot once at very close range by a small caliber pistol. The hole was small, and neat, and directly above the heart. There were powder burns still visible on the deeply

tanned skin of the chest. The heavy suntan indicated that the man had recently been much in the hot sun, and showed that he had worn two rings on the second and third fingers of his right hand. The marks of the rings were clearly visible. On the dead man's right forearm there was a large, gaudy tattoo of a screaming eagle. The tattoo had been done over a scar to camouflage it.

Bent close, The Shadow studied the fingernails of the corpse. With a small, sharp knife the black-shrouded Avenger removed tiny particles of some red dust from under the fingernails. He studied the particles. He performed the same operation on the toenails of the dead man. Meticulously, inch by inch, he went on with his close scrutiny. There were faint traces of a dried black mud in the dark hair of the body. The batlike figure of The Shadow worked in silence. Nothing else moved in the dim morgue.

Suddenly, The Shadow raised his head to listen.

There was no sound in the dim aisle or anywhere in the large room of the morgue. But The Shadow stood motionless, listening. To normal ears there was nothing to be heard shut away here below the city. But the black-shrouded figure did not have normal ears, he had the super-keen ears of The Shadow. Alert even while studying the corpse, The Shadow had heard a faint, distant sound of approaching voices.

Swiftly he slid the body back into its cabinet. Stepping over the still unmoving form of the morgue attendant, The Shadow glided noiselessly down the long aisle toward the desk where the attendant had answered the telephone earlier. The desk faced the only door into, or out of, the Morgue. The Shadow did not pause at the desk. He glided on past the desk and the main door to a section of blank stone wall. The ancient stones were large. The Shadow quickly removed two of the stones and vanished through the opened hole.

He fitted the old stones in place behind him, and stood in a dark and empty room. The walls of the dark room were wet and encrusted with a thick coating of minerals that seemed to glow in the dark. The same coating covered the floor of the room that had not been crossed by human feet for centuries. The only light in the ancient room was the flashing of the fire-opal girasol on The Shadow's hand—a light that had never dimmed since the great Master Chen T'a Tze had given the ring to The Shadow many years ago in the Orient.

The Shadow did not need even the light of the fiery girasol. There in the Orient he had learned the power of

seeing in the darkness, and now he crossed the hidden and forgotten room to a small iron door. He swung this door open, its hinges grating and grinding from the centuries of disuse. He bent low and went through the old doorway. He closed the door behind him, and locked its ancient lock with a key from the ring of keys he produced from beneath the folds of his black cloak. Swiftly he crossed this second forgotten room to another blank wall. He removed two stones and went through into a dimly lighted storeroom of the morgue. He slid the stones into place behind him.

Now The Shadow paused to listen again. The voices his keen ears had heard so far away were now much closer in the corridor outside the storeroom. There were three voices—two men and a woman. From the sounds The Shadow knew that the three people were walking slowly down the long corridor toward the entrance to the morgue. In a matter of seconds they would pass the entrance to the storeroom.

One instant The Shadow stood there immobile in the darkened storeroom, the next instant he seemed to move and vanish into the silent air itself.

Another man stood in the storeroom where The Shadow had been less than an instant before. This man seemed smaller than The Shadow, shorter and stockier, although he was actually none of these things. In place of the burning, piercing eyes of The Shadow, the new man's eyes were hooded and impassive. His immobile face and half-closed eyes had a quiet, thoughtful aspect as he stood exactly where The Shadow had last stood in the dim room. His quiet face was softened, passive, with none of the alert and steely power that marked the half-hidden face of The Shadow. And yet, beneath his short blonde hair that was only partly grey, the hawklike features of the new man seemed to strangely resemble the face of The Shadow.

Perhaps if there had been anyone to see the new man appear where The Shadow had been, and to notice the resemblance of the man to The Shadow, he would have realized that The Shadow had not vanished at all, but had only changed into the new man. And perhaps the observer would have recognized the man who now stood in the room as Lamont Cranston, wealthy socialite and international businessman, close friend and helper of Police Commissioner Ralph Weston of New York—and major alter-ego of The Shadow.

A man in the prime of life, Lamont Cranston's every move still showed the great muscular control and agility of The Shadow hidden behind the innocent exterior of the socialite the secret Avenger presented to the world. With amazing speed Cranston now hid the black cloak, slouch hat, and fiery girasol ring in the secret pockets inside his businessman's suit, the special garments folding into a size no larger than a handkerchief. All trace of The Shadow gone, Lamont Cranston stood in the storeroom and listened to the voices outside. His keen ears told him that the three people had just passed the entrance to the storeroom.

Lamont Cranston had ears as keen as those of his true self, The Shadow. All the powers and knowledge of The Shadow were Cranston's—except one. As Lamont Cranston, the fire and power of The Shadow's eyes was gone.

The power to cloud men's minds, learned long ago in the Orient from the great Chen T'a Tze, required the secret black cloak, the black slouch hat, and the fire-opal girasol ring. The secret of The Master was of the mind, its true source unknown even to Chen T'a Tze, but could not be used without the cloak, hat, and mysterious gem presented to The Shadow by the hands of The Master before he died. Only one man in each generation could have the power, and Chen T'a Tze had chosen The Shadow. The Avenger had never betrayed that trust.

But Lamont Cranston had all the other powers of The Shadow, and now, moving with the speed and silence of the secret Avenger, Cranston crossed the dim storeroom to the door that led out into the corridor. He picked up the raincoat and dark homburg he had left in the room earlier that night. He looked at the raincoat. It had become almost dry. Gliding to the sink in the storeroom, Cranston wetted the raincoat to simulate the effect of the thin rain falling outside on the London streets. He checked his shoes. They were still wet and muddy.

Satisfied, Cranston put on the raincoat and dark homburg, and silently opened the storeroom door. He stepped out into the brightly lighted corridor. He made his breathing quick and heavy as if he had been hurrying through the rain to catch the three people. No more than a few seconds had passed since The Shadow had become Lamont Cranston, and the three people were only a few feet past the storeroom door. Cranston coughed aloud. The older of the two men turned to smile at Lamont Cranston.

2

"THERE YOU ARE, Lamont," Police Commissioner Weston said.

A tall, distinguished man with silver-grey hair, Weston smiled at his friend Lamont Cranston and stood waiting for Cranston to reach him. Behind the suave manner and smile, though, Commissioner Weston's eyes showed deep concern. The Commissioner was a worried man.

"Sorry to be late, Commissioner," Cranston said, "but my call took longer than I expected. We left New York in such a hurry, I left a lot of business details unfinished, I'm afraid."

The second man, a short, dark-haired man with heavy, brooding eyebrows, narrowed his eyes as he looked at Cranston. The man seemed to be studying Cranston's raincoat and shoes. This man was Superintendent Rufus Jones of the C.I.D., Scotland Yard, and Cranston noted that, like all good detectives, Jones was naturally observant and suspicious. But Jones seemed satisfied, and smiled at Cranston.

"I thought perhaps our corpse was too much for you to look at, Cranston," Superintendent Jones said.

"Lamont has seen enough corpses, Superintendent," Weston said drily. "He often works with me on special cases such as this."

"We rather frown on amateur help here, Commissioner," Jones said, "but this is a somewhat special matter, isn't it? Still, I don't see what Cranston can do to help. After all, he isn't exactly familiar with our part of the world."

"I've done a great deal of business here," Cranston said. "My London company is my second largest. I visit here often."

"That's hardly police work, Cranston," Jones snapped.

Cranston smiled politely, but for an instant his impassive eyes flashed like the eyes of The Shadow. He could have told Superintendent Jones that the many visits of The Shadow to the mists of England had hardly been business, but the secret of The Shadow was known to very few, and the Avenger never wanted to change that fact. Even Commissioner Weston did not know that Lamont Cranston and the mysterious

crime-fighter were one and the same. The woman who stood in the corridor looking at Cranston, and who spoke now for the first time, was one of the very few who knew that she was looking at The Shadow.

"Was the business successful, Lamont?" Margo Lane asked.

"Inconclusive, I'm afraid, Margo," Cranston said cryptically. "I will have more work to do."

Margo Lane nodded to show that she understood what Cranston was telling her—that his secret inspection of the corpse had revealed little. Margo was not a tall woman, but the erect carriage of her lithe figure made her seem taller. Her long, dark hair framed an alert, intelligent face that fitted her position as private executive secretary to the wealthy and successful Lamont Cranston. In her dark blue eyes there was the hint of hidden steel that fitted her other, more secret life—close friend, operative, and right hand of The Shadow. A brief career in the theater, after leaving her native Denver, had given her the poise to maintain her dual life, as well as the acting ability to assume her many roles in aid of the black-garbed Avenger.

"Meanwhile, we have work to do now," Superintendent Jones said drily. "Not that I expect you to find anything that we haven't found, but Washington insists you view the corpse, Commissioner."

"They want to be sure," Weston said, "it's a delicate situation."

They had reached the door into the morgue by this time, and Superintendent Jones reached out to open the door and go into the grim room. Jones stopped and looked at Margo Lane.

"Has Miss Lane also seen many corpses, Commissioner?" Jones asked. "Perhaps she should wait at the desk?"

"Margo knew Paulson, too, Superintendent," Cranston said. "She might see something the rest of us miss."

Jones shrugged. "Such a beautiful girl to know about corpses."

Margo smiled. "I'll be all right, Superintendent, and thank you for the description."

"The way the world is today," Cranston said, "I wonder if there is anyone left who hasn't seen dead men."

Jones nodded, "You're probably right, Cranston, but I keep hoping there will be someone still innocent. Well, we better get at it and get it over with, eh?"

Turning, Superintendent Jones opened the door and stepped into the morgue. Cranston, Weston and Margo followed

Jones into the dimly lighted room with its tiers of large cabinets stretching away in rows and aisles into the gloom where the noises of the giant city outside were only a distant murmur. At his desk, the morgue attendant looked up as they came in. The man rubbed his eyes as he looked at Jones. The attendant seemed dazed, confused, and looked at the superintendent for a full thirty seconds before he seemed to realize that he should be standing in the presence of his superior.

"Sorry, sir," the attendant said, "I...I didn't see you, I was..."

The attendant stopped and brushed his hand across his eyes again. The confused man shook his head as if to clear away a thick fog that filled his brain in the gloomy room of the morgue. Jones looked at the man sharply.

"Are you all right, Higgins?" Jones snapped.

"Yessir, I'm fine, sir. I must have...must have dozed off a moment, sir."

"You're sure everything is all right down here?" Jones pursued.

"Yessir."

"The corpse is ready?"

The attendant blinked. "Corpse?"

"The Paulson corpse. I called you not ten minutes ago, Higgins. Have you been drinking?" Jones asked, annoyed.

From behind Jones, Cranston watched the confused attendant. The man seemed to be fighting to remember something. Only Cranston and Margo knew what the attendant was trying to remember, to call up from the recesses of his mind that had been clouded by The Shadow. But the attendant would not remember. All the man would be able to recall would be a vague sensation of having seen something, somewhere, at some time.

"I...I must be tired, sir," the attendant faltered. "I remember your call, yes. Paulson. I went back to open the cabinet, yes, I remember that. I suppose I must have done it. Only...I must have dreamed, a black figure..."

"Get a grip on yourself, Higgins," Jones snapped. "Is the Paulson body ready?"

"I'm sure it is, sir. I remember going back. It was later, when I sat down that I dreamed, of course."

"Then stop wasting our time," Jones said.

"Sorry, sir. If you'll follow me."

In silence they all followed the attendant back into the recesses of the large room. At the third cross row Higgins turned to go down the row. As he turned, Higgins seemed to

tense as if afraid of what he would see. But there was nothing to see except the low slab drawn out from the cabinet. The body of the man lay on the slab. Cranston was satisfied to see the body ready for viewing. As The Shadow he had slid the slab back into the cabinet, and the attendant, Higgins, had awakened and reopened the cabinet according to instructions, his encounter with The Shadow only a vague memory. Higgins was visibly relieved.

"I was sure I'd done it all right, sir. Just a bit tired, I imagine," Higgins said.

Jones nodded and dismissed the attendant. The Scotland Yard man looked down at the body. Then he looked at Commissioner Weston who stood beside him as they viewed the remains of the dead man, the small bluish hole standing out on the dead man's chest. Weston nodded now.

"Yes, that's George Paulson," Weston said. "Shot once at close range, the poor devil."

"His mother and fiancée identified him too," Jones said. "They flew over as soon as we identified him."

"He'd escaped so many close calls when he was on the New York force," Weston said. "Ironical he should die here."

"You have no idea who in London might have wanted to kill him?" Jones said.

Weston shook his head. "As far as I know, Jones, he had been in London only a few times in his life."

"Well, somebody shot him, and from very close range. Whoever it was did not want him identified, unless it was simply a thief," Jones said.

"A thief?" Cranston said.

"That's what Monk thinks. He's the inspector in the case, Cranston," Jones explained. "You see, we found Paulson in an alley in the East End, a very unsavory area. He had been stripped clean—wallet, rings, watch, everything except the pistol and the money in his shoes. That's what took us so long to identify him."

"No papers at all?" Cranston asked.

"Nothing but the clothes he was wearing," Jones said. "That was what we worked on, of course. The clothes were obviously American. They had the American cut, but no labels, so we worked through Washington. His fingerprints were on file, of course, considering his job."

"All labels were cut out?" Weston said. The Commissioner was frowning, and running his hand through his silver-grey hair. He gave Cranston a worried look again.

"No, I'd say there never had been any labels," Jones said,

"or at least not for a long time. My guess would be that Paulson either cut out the labels himself a long time ago, or wore clothes without any labels in the first place. There were dry cleaning marks, but that couldn't help us unless we already knew what city in America he had come from."

Cranston considered this information. The wealthy socialite realized what Jones was saying. If the labels had been cut out of Paulson's clothes, then it would strongly indicate that the unknown killer had purposely tried to prevent Paulson being identified at least for a few days. But if the labels had already been missing from Paulson's clothes, then the taking of Paulson's wallet, watch, and other valuables could easily be no more than the work of a mugger in a dark alley who only inadvertently had made identification so difficult.

Between the two possibilities, Cranston knew, there was a vast difference. The first choice would almost definitely prove that Paulson had been intentionally murdered by someone who knew who he was and wanted no identification. The second choice would almost as surely prove that Paulson had been killed by a stranger after no more than his valuables. But if the second choice were true, it raised an even more difficult question: why would Paulson have been wearing clothing without labels? Very few men took the labels from their clothes. Cranston was still thinking about this when Jones spoke again.

"Are you going to examine the body, Cranston? In case we missed anything?" Jones said.

"No, Superintendent, I'm sure your men have missed nothing of importance," Cranston said, sure that at least The Shadow had missed nothing of importance in his earlier scrutiny of the body. "I think what we need now is to discuss the details of the crime itself. I think the Commissioner may have a few questions."

"All right," Jones agreed, "we'll go back to my office and talk to Inspector Monk. But I assure you, Cranston, that we have very little to go on. As a matter of fact, the main thing we have is one simple question."

"What question, Jones?" Weston asked.

Lamont Cranston began to nod his head slowly, his impassive eyes looking down at the dead body of George Paulson. There was, really, only the one basic question that held the key to the whole thing.

"The same question Washington seems to have, Commissioner," Jones said slowly. "What was a Field Supervisor of

the Peace Corps stationed in New Guinea doing in a London back alley, dead, reeking of whisky, with one thousand pounds in English money hidden in his shoe, and carrying a pistol he had not fired!!”

3

TWO FLOORS above the greystone courtyard of New Scotland Yard, the traffic of a London night close by and loud in the rain and wind, Superintendent Jones motioned Cranston, Margo and Commissioner Weston into the leather seats of his small office. The trip through the narrow wet streets of the old city had been silent, each of them intent on the single question that Jones had spoken in the gloom of the morgue. The same question that had brought Weston and his friend Cranston across the Atlantic—why had George Paulson been thousands of miles from his New Guinea post?

“He was definitely supposed to be in New Guinea,” Weston said now as he faced the superintendent.

“You’re absolutely sure?” Jones said.

“Peace Corps Headquarters had no knowledge that Paulson was anywhere but a hundred miles from civilization in the back country of New Guinea. That was where he was supposed to be. Five days ago he flew down to the Peace Corps office in Sydney, but supposedly returned to New Guinea the same day. That was all they knew.”

“So he was on his own?” Jones said.

Cranston was watching the rain fall outside the windows of the superintendent’s office. Except for the steady sound of traffic passing on the wet pavement, the police building was strangely silent and peaceful.

“That is what worries Washington,” Cranston said, his hooded eyes still watching the rain through the windows. “What was he doing on his own? Why the pistol? What does the one thousand pounds mean? Why was it in his shoe? Why the whisky? Even without the pistol and the money, they can’t have publicity about a Peace Corps man thousands of miles from his post, drunk probably, lurking around back alleys where he got himself killed.”

Weston ran his hands through his silver hair. “They can’t

have publicity even if Paulson's strange activities and death had nothing to do with the Peace Corps. Officially they know nothing, it's a local police matter for London. But they want to know just what Paulson was up to. So they called on me."

"Because you knew Paulson and might be considered to have a personal reason for coming here," Jones said.

Weston nodded. "George Paulson was a detective in my Homicide Département. He was young and promising. Only a year ago he quit to work for the Peace Corps. I hated to lose him, but I approved of his action, the world needs men like George to work on bigger things than homicide. Now he's dead, here where he should not have been. He was armed, when he should not have been armed. Officially, Washington knows nothing. Not even that Lamont and I came here. We were approached directly by the Peace Corps, no other agency knows about our trip. Lamont is supposedly here simply on his personal business."

Superintendent Jones lighted a heavy black pipe. Clouds of smoke ascended in the silent office around his dark face and shaggy eyebrows. Jones puffed on the pipe as he knitted his thick brows in concentration.

"And neither of you knows anything that might give us a clue? Enemies, friends, some involvement in illegal activities he might have had while he worked for your police?" Jones said.

"His record was clean as snow," Weston said.

"He seemed like a completely honest and dedicated man," Cranston said.

Margo Lane, who had remained silent all this time, now spoke.

"Lamont had me run a full check before we left New York," Margo said, "just to be sure our personal knowledge was correct. As far as any records show, Paulson did nothing wrong in his entire life. A good war record, no police trouble before he joined the force, no hint of trouble on the force. Everyone connected to him seems equally above reproach."

Jones sighed and puffed harder on his pipe. The Scotland Yard man was not happy. The pipe smoke curled up around his frowning face. At last he leaned forward and spoke into the intercom on his desk.

"Send Inspector Monk to me," Jones snapped, and then sat back and looked at Weston and Cranston. "All of which leaves us with exactly nothing to go on. A man took some french leave, which is not a crime, and wound up in London, which is also not a crime. Unfortunately he wound up dead,

which is a crime, but you can give me no reason for him to be dead. It begins to look like Monk is right, a simple case of good old American style mugging in a dark alley."

"But you don't believe that," Cranston said.

"Monk does," Jones said, "and I have nothing to go on."

Before Cranston could answer, the door to the Superintendent's office opened and a thick-set, blond man came in. The newcomer had the build of a wrestler, and the rolling gait of a sailor. The man was as wide as he was tall, and wore a battered brown felt hat above a belted trenchcoat. Below his blonde hair the fair skin of his face was heavily tanned from some sun stronger than the northern English sun. The man was annoyed.

"I was on my way out, Super," the thick-set man said.

"I won't keep you long, Monk," Jones said drily. "Commissioner Weston, Mr. Cranston, and Miss Lane, this is Inspector Monk who is in charge of the case. Not as exotic as your last case, I'm afraid, Monk."

"It's a case," Inspector Monk said shortly. "I don't much like the tropics."

"You're a gloomy man, Inspector," Jones said. "Now if you will just fill in these people on the Paulson matter."

"That won't keep me long," Monk said. "Only I'm damned if I like any Yankee interference in one of my cases. It's bad enough they have to come here to be murdered."

"That'll be about enough, Inspector," Jones snapped. "I suggest you sit down. I want *all* the details, is that clear?"

"Yessir," Monk said grudgingly.

The thick-set inspector sat down belligerently and glared at the Americans. He did not remove his hat or his trenchcoat. He sat like some stolid statue waiting to be asked a question. Superintendent Jones continued to puff on his pipe, the clouds of smoke filling the small room. No one spoke. Monk reached into his pocket and brought out a worn black notebook. The gruff inspector opened the book and began to read.

"Victim arrived at The Blue Admiral at approximately 8:00 P.M., he ordered a pint of Burton, and..."

"The Blue Admiral is a public house?" Cranston said.

"It is," Monk said.

"When you say approximately 8:00 P.M., how approximate?" Jones asked.

"Give or take ten minutes, probably less," Monk said.

"The barman was busy, but he's sure no customer waits more than a few minutes for service in his pub. He didn't actually

see Paulson come in, but it was just about eight when he took his order."

Jones nodded. "Go on."

Monk continued to read from his notebook. "Victim drank his one beer, then went back to the toilets. The men's toilet at The Blue Admiral is in the rear and around a corner out of sight from the public bar. The rear door into the alley is near the toilet. Victim was seen to enter the toilet by a man who was coming out, but victim was not seen to come out. He was not seen alive again by anyone who will admit it."

"Who found him, Inspector?" Weston asked.

"The barman," Monk said, and returned to his notes. "At 10:00 P.M. of the same night the barman took slops out to the back alley. He found victim on the ground. Victim was lying on his back, his raincoat buttoned and belted, his suit coat buttoned inside the raincoat. The barman could see the victim was dead. He called us. When I arrived I determined the victim had been shot once at extremely close range by a small caliber pistol, a .25 caliber Beretta as it turns out. Victim was armed with an unfired .38 caliber..."

"When you say close range, Inspector Monk," Cranston said, "just how close do you mean?"

"I'd say the pistol was pressed directly against his body," Inspector Monk said. "There were heavy burns on the raincoat, on the suit coat underneath, and on victim's skin."

"Thank you, Inspector," Cranston said.

Monk nodded grudgingly. "As I was saying, victim was carrying a .38 caliber Smith & Wesson police special. It was in a belt holster under his suit coat. It had not been fired."

"Under his coat and raincoat?" Cranston said.

"That was what I said," Monk snapped.

"What about fingerprints?" Cranston said.

"Only victim's prints on the pistol, not smudged or wiped, and the safety was on," Monk said.

"Thank you again, Inspector," Cranston said. "Paulson apparently did not have time to draw his pistol."

For the first time Inspector Monk looked at Cranston with a certain interest. The gruff inspector's manner changed into a grudging agreement as he nodded.

"I thought of that myself, Mr. Cranston," Monk said. "His clothing had been pulled open to find the wallet and other valuables, but neither the raincoat or coat had been unbuttoned. I would say that the victim never knew what struck him. He probably stepped out into the alley and was immediately attacked without warning."

"Very possible, Inspector," Cranston said. "Please go on."

Monk looked at his notebook again. "Time of death was determined as between 8:15 and 8:45, probably closer to 8:15. Wound was instantly fatal, it had bled very little. Examination of the corpse and clothing at the morgue indicated that the victim had probably been robbed. Two rings were missing from the right hand, victim had no wallet, money, or identification. However, one thousand pounds in new notes were later found in victim's right shoe between the sole and the inner sole.

"Victim's clothes bore no labels of origin, but were of obvious American manufacture as they contained union labels. Victim was tanned as if in the sun recently. Traces of red clay on victim's shoes were analyzed as a type of clay not known in the London area. Fingerprints and picture of victim were sent to Washington. After two days victim was identified as George Paulson, Regional Field Supervisor for the Peace Corps in New Guinea."

Inspector Monk stopped reading and closed his notebook. In the silence that now settled over the small office, Monk sat rigid but alert in his chair waiting for questions. The steady rain falling outside on the city and the heavy traffic passing along the wet streets were the only sounds in the room. Cranston leaned forward in his chair.

"What is your opinion, Inspector?" Cranston said.

"I am not paid for opinions, Mr. Cranston," Monk said.

"I think your considered opinion would help," Cranston said, "you know this city and its criminals."

"Very well," Monk said. "I should say it was a simple case of what you Americans call mugging. Paulson was unknown in the area, he asked for no one, he spoke to no one. He had his beer, went to the toilet, felt the need of some air and stepped out into the alley. It is a thoroughly bad area down there, the mugger was waiting."

Superintendent Jones puffed clouds of smoke. "As soon as we identified Paulson we checked into his movements. I must admit that Monk has some points for his theory. It seems that Paulson arrived that same night on the six-thirty jet from Paris, British European Airways, under his own name. It takes about an hour from the airport to The Blue Admiral. Hardly time for Paulson to have been involved in anything."

Cranston rubbed his chin. "On the other hand, it seems odd that a man would fly all the way from Australia and then go directly from the airport to a local pub for a beer."

"Exactly my thought, Mr. Cranston," Inspector Monk said. "In my opinion he merely stopped at the pub for a beer before going to his real destination. It was pure chance that

he picked The Blue Admiral, and pure chance that the mugger was waiting."

"Why was he in Paris?" Commissioner Weston asked.

"He wasn't," Superintendent Jones said. "He merely changed jets there. He came in on a jet from Sydney, and immediately flew to London on the BEA jet."

Margo Lane had been listening carefully. Now the beautiful woman spoke thoughtfully.

"Aren't we forgetting the thousand pounds, Lamont? Why would a thief leave all that money, and where did Paulson get it?"

"Did Sydney have any ideas about the money, Superintendent?" Cranston asked Jones.

"None. As far as they are concerned, if Paulson wasn't in New Guinea he had simply vanished. They have nothing that would remotely indicate any involvement in illegal activities by Paulson."

"As for leaving the thousand pounds," Monk said, "that is just what proves my case. A mugger hits and runs. My theory is that he attacked Paulson, found out somehow that Paulson was armed, and killed him in panic. Then he grabbed all he could find, and ran. Probably Paulson tried to reach his pistol, and that made the mugger shoot him."

Cranston nodded. "You make a good case, Inspector."

"I'll do better, Mr. Cranston," Monk said, his manner much more friendly now that his views were seemingly being accepted. "You're implying that Paulson was involved in some clandestine activity, with the thousand pounds part of it. Now if that were true, then his killer would almost certainly have *known* about the money. That alley is very dark and deserted. A real killer, unlike a nervous thief, would have had plenty of time to make a thorough search of the body. If the killer had known what he was looking for, the shoes would have been a logical place to look, eh? But the money was not taken.

"On top of that, why would a real killer who knew Paulson have bothered to take two rings? They could hardly have been that valuable, compared to one thousand pounds, and I doubt that they would have helped identify Paulson—in my experience rings rarely carry a man's name in them. The Peace Corps does not supply special rings, as far as I know."

Looking more like some stocky statue than ever, Inspector Monk sat back with a satisfied grin on his tanned face. Monk looked from one person to the other in the small room, as if challenging them to dispute his theory now. Commissioner

Weston, who liked an eager detective, smiled. Superintendent Jones and Cranston were not smiling.

"In essence, Monk," Cranston said, "you're saying that Paulson arrived in London where he was not supposed to be, for some reason no one can explain, and with one thousand pounds hidden in his shoe that we can't account for, and was then killed by pure chance?"

"It happens every day, Mr. Cranston," Monk said. "I can open the files and show you a thousand cases of complete chance."

Jones nodded uneasily. "I suppose it is possible."

"Do your thieves usually carry .25 caliber pistols?" Cranston said. "I'd say that was an unusual weapon for a mugger. Too small, not enough weight or power. It's not the kind of pistol that is readily available to small scale thieves."

"It's not usual," Monk agreed, "but a policeman cannot work on the 'usual,' Mr. Cranston."

Cranston rubbed his chin. "Paulson was not the kind of man to leave his post without a good reason. And there is a missing half hour, right, Inspector? You said it takes about an hour to get in from the airport to The Blue Admiral. Paulson had an hour and a half."

"I said it took *about* an hour," Monk said. "I'll stake my next month's wage on the extra half hour being consumed by a traffic snarl and nothing more. But to ease your mind, Mr. Cranston, we're making a thorough check at the airport to try to trace Paulson's activities."

"You're looking for the stolen objects, of course?" Weston said.

"Naturally, Commissioner," Superintendent Jones said.

"Then I think that's about all for now. I do have some business to attend to," Cranston said.

The hawk-faced socialite stood up and motioned to Margo. Inspector Monk was watching Cranston and Margo. The thick-set inspector seemed surprised.

"Business at this hour, Mr. Cranston?" Monk asked.

"No rest for an executive, Inspector."

Monk was not convinced. "Don't get in our way, Mr. Cranston. Amateurs only mess things up and get themselves hurt."

"I'll remember that, Inspector," Cranston said. "Are you ready to leave, Commissioner?"

"Jones and I have some paper work, Lamont," Weston said.

"Very good, Commissioner, I'll check with you later," Cranston said.

His face impassive, Cranston led Margo out of the office. Neither spoke as they walked down the quiet corridors of New Scotland Yard. Outside in the courtyard the rain was still falling, the wind blowing hard and gusty from the distant North Sea. Cranston did not stop as he strode across the courtyard, his raincoat flapping in the sharp wind. Her wide-brimmed hat down over her eyes, Margo walked at Cranston's side out of the courtyard into the main street of heavy traffic. At the first corner they turned into a narrower side street. As if from nowhere, a long black Rolls Royce glided out of the night and up to Cranston. He helped Margo into the car and closed the door.

"The hotel first, Stanley," Cranston said.

In the front seat of the giant car, Stanley, chauffeur, agent and personal bodyguard of Lamont Cranston and The Shadow, nodded and put the purring motor of the fine car into gear. The car eased away from the curb and was immediately swallowed up in the heavy traffic of the city. In the back seat Cranston turned to Margo.

"What do you think, Margo?"

"Inspector Monk is apparently convinced," Margo said.

"Possibly too convinced, Margo," Cranston said grimly. "You remember that Paulson was once a policeman. If he had anything on his mind, he might very well contact the police."

"You think Monk wants to close the case quickly?"

"It's possible, Margo. Monk is decidedly uncooperative, and you notice that Superintendent Jones is by no means as sure about Monk's simple mugger."

"Still, Lamont," Margo said, "Monk has a point about the rings. That does make it look like robbery."

"Perhaps, Margo," Cranston said. "I have Bombardier working on that aspect. That is where I want to go now."

"The Blue Admiral?"

"Yes."

"What shall I do?"

"Open the office," Cranston said. "Contact Burbank from the secret room and have him check fully on Paulson's family and friends. He was not married, but he had a fiancée. She's here now with his mother, as Jones said, but I want to know everything all Paulson's close friends or associates have done for the last five days."

"I'll instruct Burbank," Margo said.

The long car slid to a stop in front of The Lancaster, a small and private hotel in Kensington where Lamont Cranston had his London suite and his London offices. Margo left the car and entered the quiet and unassuming hotel. Once Cranston had driven away, she would go straight to the top floor office. There, in the secret room The Shadow maintained behind all of Cranston's luxurious offices, she would contact Burbank three thousand miles away in New York in another secret room that was the central headquarters of The Shadow. From that New York room, bathed perpetually in a dim bluish light, Burbank maintained constant contact with The Shadow and all his agents. There the central files were kept, and the far-flung operations were coordinated.

Stanley eased the car back into traffic. When the chauffeur turned again to speak to his employer, Lamont Cranston was no longer in the back seat. In the place of the wealthy socialite was the black figure of The Shadow.

"The Blue Admiral, Stanley."

The powerful, steely voice of The Shadow echoed hollowly in the silent interior of the black car. The secret Avenger's eyes burned beneath the wide brim of the black slouch hat with a fire that matched the glowing girasol ring.

"Do you have your weapons?"

"Yes sir," Stanley said.

"Then wait for me near the alley behind The Blue Admiral," The Shadow said. "And be ready, Stanley."

Stanley nodded and stopped the car on a dark side street where the falling rain was all that moved in the night. The car door opened and closed. The Shadow slid out into the night of the dark and deserted slum streets. In the distance a boat blew its mournful whistle on the river. Stanley loosened his jacket where his .45 automatic was hidden, and sat back to listen. The Shadow vanished without a sound.

4

IT WAS near closing time in the crowded public bar of The Blue Admiral. The wet and shabby denizens of the unsavory pub stood over their last beers and whiskies staring into the depths of the glasses. They were seeing, perhaps, the long and

cold night ahead—a night like all the other nights of their sordid lives of petty crime here in the lower depths of the ancient city. The Blue Admiral was the center, the “club,” the home of nameless men who clawed a precarious living in any way they found. They did not hesitate to turn like wolves on each other. The only rule here was survival, and each man was alone in a dark and harsh world that had turned its back on him long ago. So they stood, in the noisy public bar, each man alone and wary, each man ready to pounce or flee, their hands forever tense on their glasses, their eyes forever alert and watching and hidden behind a film of caution.

One of them, a stocky man of average height with a broken nose that spread thick across his heavy-jawed face, was alone at the bar, his eyes as hidden as the eyes of all the others, but his eyes a little more alert than the eyes of the others. His ears were thickened, his powerful muscles rippled beneath his sailor’s blue jacket, and he had the appearance of a middleweight boxer grown inevitably too old. Once he had, for a brief moment, held the title of this his native island. But all that was long ago, and now he lived here in the furtive slums of the city, and drank his cheap beers in public houses like The Blue Admiral. A punch-drunk old battler who lived the way he could and was no better than the rest. He stole, lied and cheated with everyone else. He gambled whenever there was a shilling in his pocket, and dreamed of the big win like all the others. A punch-drunk fighter turned to petty crime. Everyone in The Blue Admiral knew him, and knew what he was and what he did to live. The police knew who he was and what he did: Bombardier Bill Mace, a small-time hustler and vagabond just like all the other denizens of The Blue Admiral.

But they were wrong, his friends and the police. Bombardier Bill Mace was not punch-drunk, and he was not at all like the others. Behind the battered face and shabby exterior was a keen mind, the unimpaired skills of his former profession in the prize ring, and the quick and sure devotion to duty that had quickly raised him to the rank of Bombardier in his Army days. Bombardier Mace was a man with a purpose. And now, alone at the bar with his seemingly idle beer, he was not idle at all. The Bombardier was at work. He had been at work for many days here in The Blue Admiral. The Bombardier was good at his work. No one in the crowded saloon could have guessed that the ex-fighter was doing anything other than drinking his beer and gambling on the dart game going on in the rear of the pub. If they had known, or

even guessed, they would have faded like ghosts into the mists of the slums; especially the small, ratlike man who stood now beside The Bombardier.

"I'll lay 'alf a crown 'e don't finish this throw," the ratlike man said to The Bombardier.

"Done," The Bombardier said, laying his half a crown on the bar beside the one laid there by the other man. In The Blue Admiral bets were not made on word or trust, the money had to be in view where both bettors could see it.

In the dart game itself the players played without speaking an unnecessary word. The game was much like a dart game in any other London pub—with two differences. Here the game was silent, swift and expert, without wasted words or motion. Here were no friendly challenges. The players were professionals, hustlers, men who carried their own carefully prepared darts and treated those darts lovingly the way any man would treat the tools of his profession. The second difference was the money. All through the room, without the superfluous effort of conversation, crumpled bills changed hands on each throw of a dart. Sometimes a stranger arrived and challenged the winning player. They always allowed him to play, there was no way of knowing when one innocent-looking challenger would prove to be a disguised policeman. There would be no bets on such a game, and the unwanted challenger would be quickly disposed of so that the real game could proceed. Now, as The Bombardier watched impassively and the ratlike man watched nervously, a player squinted at the lighted black-and-yellow board, set, and finished the game with an unerring flick of the long thin metal dart into the narrow space of the double six.

"Thanks, Snatcher," The Bombardier said as he picked up the two half crowns.

"Ah, bloody chicken feed," the scrawny man who was called Snatcher said. "You come with me and we'll pick up a bloody pile, see?"

"A man is daft to work with you, Snatcher. A man works with you he takes the risk and you try to cheat him," The Bombardier said. "You want to bet on this game?"

"I'm cleaned out," Snatcher said.

"I hear you've got some rings."

"You heard where?" Snatcher said warily.

"I heard."

"You heard nothing," Snatcher said.

"I could have a buyer," The Bombardier said. "No questions."

"You show the buyer, maybe I show the rings," Snatcher said with a sneer.

"You show the rings, I'll show the money," The Bombardier said. "I hear those could be very hot rings, a man could get singed very bad if he was found with those rings. I hear the Yard wants those rings very badly."

"Who's your buyer?"

"You know better than that, Snatcher," The Bombardier said.

The dart game had ended again. The money changed hands, and the players prepared for the next match. At the long bar Snatcher licked his thin lips and looked down at The Bombardier's pint of beer.

"Buy me a pint, Bombardier," the ratlike man whined.

"I'll take it out of the price of the rings," The Bombardier said.

The barman brought the two pints of deep orange beer. Snatcher drank greedily. He wiped his thin lips, and his eyes strayed to the upended bottle of whiskey behind the bar.

"When can you show the cash," Snatcher asked.

"Tomorrow, you say where," The Bombardier said.

"My place then, and you come alone," Snatcher said, his ratlike face sharp and deadly. "No tricks and bring the cash, all of it."

"How much is the price?"

"A hundred quid—each," Snatcher said.

"If I don't think my buyer's getting a good price?" The Bombardier asked.

"You can whistle down the street," Snatcher said. "It's a good price. Buy me a whisky."

"Ask me tomorrow," The Bombardier said.

Without another word the ex-fighter turned his back on the ratlike little man and watched the new dart game. The Bombardier laid a bet with a big sailor against the thrower. Snatcher stood whining for a moment, and then sidled away down the bar to find a better mark for a free whisky. The Bombardier won his bet again as the thrower failed to score eighty points. The big sailor suggested doubling the bet. The Bombardier agreed. Suddenly the big sailor stared down at The Bombardier's right hand. A small opal ring on the third finger of The Bombardier's right hand seemed to be glowing faintly.

"The light hits it that way sometimes," The Bombardier said casually to the big sailor. "I got it overseas, in Malaya."

"I'd swear it was glowing like it had a light in it," the sailor said as he stared at the small ring.

"Just a trick of the light," The Bombardier said.

"I like it," the sailor said.

"It's not for sale," The Bombardier said. "My lucky piece."

"Suit yourself, chum," the big sailor said. "Double the stakes he makes a ton this throw."

"Done," The Bombardier said, laying a pound on the bar beside the sailor's ten shilling note.

The player made 107. The big sailor chortled as he picked up the money. The Bombardier did not seem to notice. His eyes were casually searching the bar. In a corner Snatcher was whining a hard-luck story to a skeptical patron. The Bombardier watched Snatcher carefully to make sure that the ratlike little man did not see him leaving. The Bombardier went through the door of the pub and out into the rain.

The slum street was dark. The rain fell steadily, and The Bombardier turned up the collar of his blue sailor's jacket. Close by a drunk staggered past in the night. Small boats were whistling on the river that flowed muddy here beneath its ancient stone banks. The Bombardier looked up and down the now deserted street. He looked down at his ring that was still glowing faintly. He waited in the shadows near the door of The Blue Admiral. No one came out. The Bombardier turned and walked to the left. He had gone no more than ten paces when he stopped. His small opal ring was glowing more faintly. He turned around and retraced his steps past the door of The Blue Admiral. The opal glowed more brightly. The Bombardier continued walking slowly through the dark night until he reached a house with its door hidden in a dark and deep recess. He was passing the deep recess in the old stone building when the voice spoke.

"Good evening, Bombardier."

The voice was low and strong in the night. It seemed to float on the wet and dark air, directionless and without human origin. A strange voice, hard and soothing at the same time, gentle and low and yet strangely commanding. The Bombardier stopped and turned to look into the dark recess. He could see nothing. The disembodied voice seemed to come from nowhere.

"Step in, quickly," the voice commanded.

The Bombardier stepped into the blackness of the hidden doorway. He vanished completely from the empty street. Inside the recess, sheltered now from the rain, his small ring

had stopped glowing and nothing moved. Then there was a faint sound of movement and an eerie red light revealed a face far back against the door. A hawklike face and two burning eyes appeared in the thin beam of red light that came from a small, glowing ring. All but the burning eyes and the hawklike nose of the strange face was hidden by the wide brim of a black slouch hat and the high collar of a black cloak. The eyes and half-hidden face appeared to float in mid-air inside the dark recess of the narrow stone entranceway. Bombardier Mace showed no fear as he looked at the face that floated detached in the small red glow of light.

"I got the signal, Chief," The Bombardier said. "I was expecting you. What do the police think?"

"That it was a robbery, Bombardier," the eerie voice of The Shadow said.

"It could be," The Bombardier said. "In The Blue Admiral there are fifty men who would kill their mother for five quid."

"Perhaps," the low, harsh voice of The Shadow said.

The small red glow seemed to go out, and the hawklike face and burning eyes vanished again into the darkness. There was a sound of movement. The Bombardier felt a small, round object placed into his hand. In the dark entranceway there was a faint whirring sound. The Bombardier knew what it was. He had been an agent of The Shadow for many years, helping the secret Avenger in his battle against the forces of evil that infested the world, and he had made many reports to the cloaked and hooded figure of his chief. Now he held the small microphone and waited as the faint whir of the micro-recorder filled the dark entranceway. Far away in the perpetual blue light of The Shadow's secret headquarters in New York, every report of every agent of the crime fighter was filed and ready for use.

"Report," the low voice commanded.

The Bombardier raised the miniature microphone. "Agent 109 reports. Location of missing rings of George Paulson may have been made. A small-time criminal who uses the name of Snatcher is reported to have two rings in his possession, he seems willing to sell these rings to me. In conversation this night I received certain confirmation that Snatcher does have the rings. I have made an appointment to meet Snatcher tomorrow night for the purpose of seeing and purchasing the rings.

"Check of activities of Paulson on night of death and check of stories given by barman and patrons of The Blue

Admiral seems to confirm police information. Time of arrival checks, time of discovery of body also checks. Barman did immediately inform police of discovery. Paulson's disappearance that night appears to have been unnoticed in the bar, as reported to police. No sound of the death shot was heard, no one has been located who knew Paulson before he arrived at The Blue Admiral that night. Agent 109 believes Paulson was completely unknown in the pub, and was also unknown to any patron of said public house."

The Bombardier completed his report and stopped. In the dark entranceway the hidden voice of The Shadow chuckled.

"A clear, precise report, Bombardier, as always," The Shadow said.

"Thank you, Chief."

"Do you believe that this Snatcher has the rings?"

"Yessir, I do," The Bombardier said. "My source of information is a known fence who says that Snatcher offered the rings to him. The fence would not touch them since they are involved in a murder. That seems to be common knowledge, the murder. Information like that has a way of traveling rapidly in this area. However, I could get no hint of a possible murderer beyond the Snatcher. That is unusual. They usually know such things here."

"What do you think about the Snatcher as our killer," the harsh voice of The Shadow demanded.

"I think not, sir," The Bombardier said. "He does not have the necessary courage. He is rarely known to be armed."

There was a short silence as The Shadow considered this last statement of The Bombardier. The Avenger trusted The Bombardier who was one of his best agents in England or anywhere. The Bombardier had rarely been wrong since the day The Shadow had found him. The ex-boxer had been really no more than a petty criminal then, but had known at once that the work of the mysterious crime fighter was the cause he had been looking to serve.

"Paulson was armed," The Shadow said softly in the dark entranceway. "Men like your Snatcher are like cornered rats, they will strike most when afraid."

"It is possible, Chief," The Bombardier said, "if Paulson drew his pistol. But the police report says that he did not draw his pistol."

"I am aware of that," The Shadow's voice said sharply. "Is that your full report, Bombardier?"

"With two more points, Chief."

"What are they?"

"Paulson was carrying a suitcase when he entered The Blue Admiral. The barman did not report that because he did not see the bag below the bar. But two patrons remember the bag, and that Paulson carried it with him to the toilet."

"He took it to the toilet?" The Shadow said, his voice hard and sharp.

"Yessir," The Bombardier said. "My informants noticed this because it was an odd thing to do. They have a quick eye for possible valuables, and when a man will not leave his bag at the bar even for the short time he is in a toilet, they notice such a fact. They are convinced that the bag contained valuables of some kind."

"Possibly, Bombardier," The Shadow said, his low voice thoughtful in the dark.

"Why else would he take it with him to the toilet?"

"Perhaps because he did not plan to return to the bar," The Shadow said. "He knew he would be leaving the pub by that back door."

The Bombardier considered this idea as he stood in the dark recess of the entranceway, the powerful presence of The Shadow hovering all around him. The mind of his chief always impressed the ex-fighter. When The Shadow appeared, everything seemed possible to The Bombardier, the sense of purpose he had found when he joined the endless battle against the evil of the world became renewed and strengthened at each meeting he had with the mysterious avenger.

"You think he wanted to leave unseen?"

"Or had a meeting in that alley," the eerie voice of The Shadow said from out of the blackness. "Why wasn't the bag reported, Bombardier?"

"Down here they don't volunteer information to the police," The Bombardier explained. "They probably think that someone grabbed the bag, and they won't inform on a fellow thief. The bag was not found by the police or anyone else."

"And what is your second point of information?" The Shadow said.

"You asked about anything at all unusual," The Bombardier said slowly. "Well, the barman remarked that there was something odd about the police. They did not arrive all at once. He called The Yard directly, but Inspector Monk got here at least five minutes before his men from The Yard. He was alone with the body in the alley for at least two minutes."

"All right, Bombardier," The Shadow's voice said from the darkness. "Go back to your post. Keep close watch on the man called Snatcher, perhaps I will pay him a visit in your

place tomorrow. See if you can find out anything about anyone Paulson might have met."

"Yessir," The Bombardier said.

There was a silence in the dark recess. Then The Bombardier felt a movement, a sudden moving of the air as if a small wind had brushed his battered face. Something moved past him, and for a brief instant he saw the great, batlike figure of his chief loom up in the entrance of the hidden recess. The giant black figure was etched for that instant against the faint light of a distant street lamp on the deserted slum street.

Then The Bombardier was again alone in the night.

5

THE ALLEY behind The Blue Admiral was not long, but it was narrow and very dark. It reached from the side street, where a single street lamp was the only illumination in the wet night, to a blank wall ten feet past the rear door of the public house. The cobblestones and the old and blackened brick walls of the buildings glistened wet in the night. From the street the alley appeared to be only a dark, blank space without beginning or end. It was impossible to see a foot into its depths from the street. Inside the alley itself no one with normal vision could have seen more than a few feet without a light. But the cloaked figure that glided now into the alley had far more than normal vision. The Shadow glided slowly over the wet cobblestones, his piercing eyes studying every inch of the ground and walls. He worked carefully, his eyes that could see as clearly in the dark as in the daylight picking out each tiny object in the alley.

Not far from the door that was the rear door of The Blue Admiral, The Shadow bent lower to the stone ground. Here the stones had been scraped and loosened by the passage of many feet. It was the spot where George Paulson's body had been found, and where the police had walked. The Shadow stood up and looked all around him. The spot was not ten feet from the pub's rear door. A thin line of light beneath the closed pub door showed that anyone opening the door would have stood in a path of light that could have reached

all the way to the corpse of George Paulson. The Shadow had no doubt that the light from the rear door would have revealed the body to anyone who had come out through that door. Presumably no one had come out until the barman had come to empty his slops into the rows of garbage cans. As he stood there, The Shadow closed his eyes and concentrated. When the Avenger opened his eyes again he had willed his vision to be that of any normal man. He looked around. Now, with the eyes of all other men, he could see only the faint line of light from beneath the pub door. He could see, faintly, a few of the garbage cans. He could see little else, the alley far too dark and shut away by the walls of the buildings. The Shadow looked up. There were no windows in the buildings. Where there had been a few windows once, there were only bricked up outlines of windows now.

Suddenly a wide path of light fell across the black figure of The Shadow. The rear door of The Blue Admiral had opened. A tall man stood in the doorway. The man peered out into the night and rubbed his eyes. The Shadow faded instantly into the black beyond the path of light. But in that instant of first light the man had seen the looming black figure like a giant bat in the night. The man swayed in the doorway and rubbed his eyes again. He peered out into the night, his drunken face a study in bewilderment. Then, from the shadows, the stray dog darted across the path of light. The man in the doorway swore and lunged out into the alley in pursuit of the dog. He lurched, swayed against the garbage cans with a loud clatter that echoed down the length of the dark alley, and staggered off along the alley until his swaying figure showed once at the entrance to the alley and was gone. The Shadow did not move. He had seen what he had expected—the light from the pub rear door had reached him where he had been standing at the exact spot where Paulson's body had been found. Anyone who had come from the pub would have seen Paulson lying in the alley. And anyone who had been waiting in the alley would have seen Paulson come out of the pub rear door in a bright path of light. Coming from the light into the dark, Paulson would have been almost blind in the dark alley for a few minutes after closing the pub door behind him. But Paulson had been a good policeman, he would have known that he would be unable to see for those few minutes.

The Shadow waited motionless for a long minute after the drunk had staggered his way from the alley. The starving dog had slunk back and was cautiously approaching the garbage

again. A single automobile drove through the rain somewhere in the distance. The Shadow prepared to continue his scrutiny of the alley—when he became aware that he was not alone in the alley. The drunk had gone, the dog had returned, but The Shadow and the dog were not alone. Someone else had come into the alley behind the thin dog. The Shadow froze where he stood against a wet brick wall. His trained mind concentrated, and he saw the figure already approaching the spot where Paulson had been found. A large figure, thick and strangely heavy. The figure in the alley now was tall and wide; black and with the appearance of great, black wings. The figure looked like a giant bat! Like The Shadow himself!

The burning eyes of the secret Avenger stared hard at the lurking figure. An Inverness cape! The man wore a dark Inverness cape in the rain, its shoulder length cloak spreading above its normal overcoat like the wings of some hovering bird. The man wore a wide hat pulled down very low over his face, so low that even the vision of The Shadow could not make out the face of the man. The man carried a thin, black cane with an ornate silver handle. The Inverness cape was so large The Shadow could not tell the size and shape of the man, his body hidden by the voluminous folds of the coat that made his figure look like the figure of The Shadow himself. But the man was not The Shadow, and he could not see in the dark. As The Shadow watched, the man switched on a small flashlight and bent to search the ground where George Paulson had died.

The wierd laugh of The Shadow echoed up and down the dark alley.

The man whirled, looked in all directions through the falling rain. The man could see nothing, his flashlight playing all through the alley but finding only shadows on the old brick walls.

The Shadow laughed again.

“What the . . . ! Who is it?!” the man said.

The voice of the man was low, muffled, speaking through a thick wool scarf wrapped around the lower part of his hidden face.

“Why do you search the ground?” the hard voice of The Shadow said to the man.

“Where are you? Show yourself!” the man cried, his muffled voice furious with anger as he searched the darkness for the source of the voice that spoke to him from nowhere.

“What is it you look for?” The Shadow said. “What did you fail to get when you killed George Paulson?”

The man laughed. "Paulson? I know no Paulson, and I am not afraid of a voice."

From where he stood against the wall in the shadows, his black-cloaked figure blending into the other shadows of the alley, The Shadow stepped forward. His powerful eyes above the high collar of his cloak burned into the man with the flashlight.

"Then see me and be afraid!" The Shadow said as he stepped toward the man, his power ready to cloud the mind of the man who defied him. "I know the evil of men, and I punish that evil!"

The Shadow mocked the man with his eerie laugh, and moved another step closer. The man saw him now. The man seemed to shiver as he saw the giant black figure moving closer. The Shadow laughed again, his burning eyes ready to pierce into the man's brain. Suddenly the man moved, the flashlight shone full into the face of The Shadow. For an instant, The Shadow blinked. In that split second the flashlight went out and the man leaped. The sudden change from the light directly in his eyes, to total darkness, for one second blinded The Shadow. Then his full powers returned and he saw the man leaping upon him. Before even The Shadow could move a muscle, the man was on him. The man's open hand flashed and the blow of the edge of the hand struck The Shadow full on the neck. The edge of the prowler's hand was as hard as stone. Instantly, The Shadow knew that he was facing a man trained in judo and the deadly practice of karate. The blow was a perfect blow, a death blow—for anyone but The Shadow. Automatically, with all the art learned from the great Chen T'a Tze himself, the trained muscles of The Shadow responded to the killing blow. His reflexes faster than those of any other man alive, The Shadow in that instant slipped the powerful stroke and his controlled muscles took the now less-than-deadly force with no more than a small loss of balance.

The Shadow laughed.

The attacker whirled and ran. His balance recovered, The Shadow bounded in pursuit, his great black cloak flying out into the rain behind him. The man ran fast, but The Shadow reached him before he could gain the open entrance to the dark alley. The Shadow laughed again, mocking the man. But this man was neither weak nor afraid. As The Shadow reached his fleeing figure, the attacker turned again. There was a flash of steel. Even in full run, The Shadow saw the sword in the hand of the man he pursued. The ornate silver-headed

cane was a sword cane. The man had the sword out and aimed at the giant, batlike figure of The Shadow as it bore down on him. The Shadow gathered his muscles as he ran, and with a sudden twist evaded the lethal blade aimed at his heart. Again the attacker turned and raced out of the alley, his sword attack gaining him two steps on The Shadow. Once more The Shadow ran after the man. He reached the entrance to the alley. The unknown man was only four long strides ahead. The Shadow reached the street close behind the fleeing man, and a shot exploded in the night. Flame seemed to sear the cheek of The Shadow. The Avenger fell to the ground. The second shot struck high on a wall above the head of The Shadow.

The piercing eyes of the crime fighter searched the dark street for the source of the shots. Directly ahead of him, partly hidden in the shadows of the dim street, a long black car stood in the falling rain. It was parked no more than twenty yards from the mouth of the alley. The door beside the driver's seat was open, and The Shadow could see the thin muzzle of a longbarreled pistol aimed directly at him. But no third shot came. The unknown man from the alley had reached the black car, and the car, an American Cadillac, was already moving. The Shadow bounded up, but he was too late. As he raced toward the car through the dark rain, the man in the Inverness cape leaped into the rear seat through a door held open. The door closed, and the Cadillac roared away into the night. The Shadow had only time to see that the driver of the Cadillac, the one who had fired at him, was a small, swarthy man who wore a chauffeur's uniform. The black Cadillac turned a corner and vanished, and The Shadow was alone in the middle of the wet and empty street.

As if from nowhere, another car approached behind The Shadow. He whirled to face this new threat. But the new car was his own Rolls Royce with the grim and anxious face of Stanley behind the steering wheel. The Shadow wasted no words. He jumped into the back seat, and nodded once to his alert chauffeur and helper. Stanley needed no further instructions. With its accelerator to the floor, the powerful Rolls Royce leaped forward at the command of its special motor. Only seconds had passed since Stanley had driven up, and as the Rolls Royce turned the corner after the Cadillac, the black American car was still in sight through the misty rain of the London night. The Rolls Royce roared in chase. Soon they had gained enough for the Shadow to see a faint white face at the rear window of the Cadillac. Then the Cadillac

gathered speed and the Rolls Royce gained no more. The hawklike face of The Shadow watched the American car ahead. It had no license plates, and it was clear that the Cadillac, too, was a special car. The Rolls could gain no more now that the unknown men in the Cadillac had seen that they were being followed. For another mile the silent chase went on through the narrow and empty streets of the East End. Then a wide and busy street was reached, and the Cadillac blended into the stream of cars and was gone. Stanley slowed the Rolls Royce, and turned apologetically to The Shadow.

"Sorry, chief, they had too good a start. That Cadillac is a special job, too."

"We will find them again, Stanley," The Shadow said. "They are looking for something. They will come to me again."

"What did Bombardier tell you?" Stanley asked as he drove slowly now along the crowded streets of central London.

"That he thinks he has found the man who has the missing rings," The Shadow said. "I do not think now that this is a matter of robbery, Stanley, but the rings could still be important. The man in that alley was clever and ruthless, and whatever it is he wants he does not have yet. Did you see either the man in the alley or the driver?"

"No, chief, I was parked down the block. I didn't even see that car drive up. I came when I heard the shots," Stanley said.

Where he sat in the back seat of the Rolls Royce, the eyes of The Shadow burned with an angry glow. The unknown man in the alley had been looking for something. George Paulson had been stripped of his possessions, including a suitcase. And yet Bombardier said that he was sure this petty criminal named Snatcher had Paulson's rings. Bombardier also said that Snatcher was not the type to kill a man for a few rings. The Shadow leaned forward and reached for a small black box that hung on the rear of the front seat of his special Rolls Royce. As the Avenger picked up the box it began to glow a faint bluish color. The Shadow held the box and sat back in the dark rear of the car. Then the voice of Margo Lane came suddenly from the glowing black box in The Shadow's hand.

"Margo here," the beautiful secretary's voice said as if in the car herself.

"Report," The Shadow said softly into the small transmitter-receiver.

Margo's voice was cool and crisp. "Burbank has been instructed, he has begun the investigation of the activities of all those known to have been associated with Paulson. All New York agents are on the case, Burbank promises a full report by late tomorrow morning. Commissioner Weston called to ask us to go with him to talk with Paulson's mother and fiancée. He expects us to meet him at their hotel, The Belvedere, in twenty minutes."

In the silent car The Shadow thought for a time without moving or speaking. The mother and fiancée of the dead man might have the key he needed. He spoke into the glowing box.

"Wait for me in the lobby of The Belvedere, Margo. Be very careful. Watch for a black Cadillac without license plates. Look out for a swarthy man. He might be wearing a chauffeur's uniform, or he might not be. Be careful, he is armed and dangerous. Watch for a taller man who may be wearing an Inverness cape and carrying a silver handled cane."

"Who are they, chief?" Margo's cool voice asked. The efficient girl did not frighten easily. She had long known the risks of The Shadow's battle against evil.

"I don't know, Margo, but I will know," The Shadow said, and his mocking laugh echoed softly in the back of the dark car.

The echo of the eerie laugh faded away, and the small box ceased glowing where it again hung on the back of the front seat. The red glow of the fiery girasol ring vanished from the rear seat of the car. When Stanley turned again to ask where he should drive next, The Shadow was no longer in the back seat. Lamont Cranston sat there, his impassive face and hooded eyes deep in thought. The wealthy socialite looked up as Stanley turned to him.

"The Belvedere, Stanley," Lamont Cranston said. "Park out of sight and wait for Margo and me. Watch for our two recent friends, but don't let them see you."

"Right, chief," Stanley said.

The powerful Rolls Royce quickened its pace as it drove on through the rain along the bright streets of the West End. Lamont Cranston sat back, but behind the impassive eyes Cranston was thinking about the two strangers, the Snatcher, the darkness of the alley behind The Blue Admiral, and the

insistence of Inspector Monk that the death of George Paulson had been a matter of simple violent robbery. Cranston was also thinking of the way the path of light from the rear door of the public house would have revealed the body of Paulson to anyone who had come out of The Blue Admiral that night.

9

IN THE LOBBY of the Hotel Belvedere, Margo Lane sat alone. Her long, slender legs were crossed as she sat quietly at ease as if waiting for no more than her date of the evening, or for a simple appointment with her well-known employer. But her eyes were not quiet. The quick blue eyes of the beautiful woman missed nothing that happened in the ornate lobby of the elegant hotel. She saw Cranston the instant he entered the lobby and stood just inside the door looking for her.

"Here, Lamont," Margo called.

Cranston smiled to her as he walked from the entrance across the lobby to where she sat waiting. His impassive face, so well known in London, revealed no more than the pleasure of a friend and employer upon seeing his secretary. But Cranston, too, missed little that was in the baroque lobby of the grand hotel. He was certain that no one was watching them, but he had learned long ago that his guard could never be down. So, now, he smiled and pretended to chat lightly with Margo as he sat beside her to wait for Commissioner Weston. His lips smiled, and his hooded eyes were light, but his questions were not light.

"Anything unusual?"

"No, nothing at all," Margo answered, her manner as light and unimportant as Cranston's to anyone who could be watching. "The men you described haven't appeared."

"I doubt if they have connected me to The Shadow," Cranston said, "but it is possible they will be watching Mrs. Paulson and the fiancée."

"Perhaps Inspector Monk isn't quite as sure it was robbery as he pretends," Margo said, nodding faintly toward a man who sat across the lobby half-hidden behind a newspaper. "I'm sure I saw that man at Scotland Yard."

"I recognize him," Cranston agreed. "Perhaps you're right, Margo, or perhaps Monk is watching me."

Briefly and quietly, Cranston told Margo what he had learned from The Bombardier, and what had happened in the alley behind The Blue Admiral. He had just finished when Commissioner Weston entered the lobby of the hotel. The silver-haired Police Commissioner strode toward them.

"Lamont, Margo," Weston said in greeting.

"Good evening, Commissioner," Cranston said. "Any news?"

Weston shook his head. "Not yet, Lamont. Monk is still looking for the taxi that brought Paulson from the airport, if it was a taxi. His men are combing the city for anyone who may have been on the same flight from Paris and remembers Paulson. Jones is working on trying to trace Paulson from Australia to Paris. So far the Peace Corps still can't come up with any reason for Paulson to have been in London."

"I don't think they will," Cranston said. "Whatever brought him here, I don't think it was Peace Corps business."

"Perhaps the mother and fiancée can help us," Weston said.

Cranston nodded and stood up. Weston led Cranston and Margo across the lobby to the elevators. They rode up in silence to the floor where the dead man's mother had her room. They were alone in the elevator, and the corridor was empty as they reached the room door. Mrs. Alma Paulson opened the door herself. She was a small, thick woman with grey hair and a pale face that was red around her eyes from crying. When she recognized Weston she almost began to cry again. A tall, blonde girl stepped toward her and put her arms around Mrs. Paulson. The girl was more than beautiful, and there were the signs of tears around her eyes also. Now she led Mrs. Paulson to a couch. Weston, Cranston and Margo followed her into the room, closing the door behind them. Mrs. Paulson looked up at Weston.

"I'm sorry, Commissioner, but when I saw you I remembered all the times I worried about poor George when he worked for you. I was so happy when he left the police and joined the Peace Corps. Now he's dead. Why, Commissioner? How? He was so happy in the Peace Corps. Why did he come here?"

"I don't know, Mrs. Paulson," Weston said.

The beautiful blonde girl looked at Weston. "Have you found anything at all yet?"

"No, Miss Allyn, but the police are working hard."

The man's voice took them all by surprise.

"Apparently not hard enough," the man said.

He was tall and muscular and in his late twenties. Where he stood across the room near the windows he had been out of sight from the door. Concerned with Mrs. Paulson and June Allyn, the fiancée of the dead man, they had not seen the man when they came in. Now he stepped forward as he spoke. His dark brown hair was cropped short, his good suit was immaculate and very correct, and on his finger he wore a ring that identified him as an employee of The United States Government. All this Cranston saw in the instant the man stepped away from the window and spoke bitterly to them.

"George is dead, and what are the police doing?" the man said. "Murdered and robbed in some damned back alley and they can't find his killer!"

"They are doing all they can, Mr.?" Weston said.

"Byrd, Commissioner," the tall man said, "Jeff Byrd, I'm an attaché at the embassy."

"Is the embassy concerned with this?" Cranston said.

"I'm taking care of Mrs. Paulson and June," Jeff Byrd said, "and George was a friend of mine. A close friend, Mr. Cranston."

"You are convinced that it is a robbery murder?" Cranston asked.

"I'm not a policeman, Mr. Cranston," Byrd said, "but what other motive is there? If the police have any other ideas I would like to hear them. In a way I feel guilty, I was the one who talked George into serving in the Peace Corps. I told him he could do so much more than be just a policeman. If I hadn't convinced him he would still be alive!"

Mrs. Alma Paulson wiped her red eyes. "Don't blame yourself, Jeff, we all thought he was better off in the Peace Corps."

"If only he had gotten in touch with me when he arrived instead of going to that damned pub," Jeff Byrd said.

Cranston listened and watched the tall embassy official. There was something odd about Byrd. The man was young to have any decent position at the embassy, and yet he seemed to know all about the case, and had a definite air of authority. Byrd moved with the quick and sure movements of a trained athlete. There was a faint, very faint, bulge at Byrd's waist that could have been a hidden pistol. Embassy attaches did not usually carry guns any more than Peace Corps men did. And behind Byrd's diplomatic manner there was a hard glint in his eyes that had a steely look that did not quite fit

with his role as a minor diplomat. The grey eyes of the attache were cold and dangerous.

"Just why *was* Paulson in London, Mr. Byrd?" Cranston asked.

"You mean the police don't even know that yet?" Byrd snapped.

"Perhaps you could tell us, Mr. Byrd," Commissioner Weston said. "We came here to find out if any of you could tell us that."

"I haven't a hint, damn it," Byrd said angrily. "If I knew that I would have told the police. What I simply don't understand is why George didn't call me. He always called me when he came to London. All I can think of is that he was doing something important and didn't have time to call before he was killed."

"Something important?" Cranston asked.

"Perhaps some Peace Corps business," Jeff Byrd said.

"You mean that the Peace Corps hasn't told you that they don't know why he was in London?" Cranston said.

"No, why should they?" Byrd said shortly.

"Just what do you do at the Embassy Mr. Byrd?" Cranston asked.

"I'm on the protocol staff, and not very high," Byrd said, his eyes narrowed but his lips smiling.

"I see," Cranston said. "Then they didn't brief you on the full case, and yet you're *on* the case?"

"As I said, I'm a personal friend," Byrd explained. "I asked to be assigned to Mrs. Paulson's aid, and they agreed, that's all."

The explanation sounded plausible enough, and yet Cranston did not believe it. He was certain that Jeff Byrd knew a lot more than he was telling, and that the State Department man was more than a low man on the protocol staff. Cranston would like to have asked Byrd about the thousand pounds hidden in Paulson's shoe, but that was a part of the case that the police had not yet divulged to anyone, not even Mrs. Paulson and the dead man's fiancée, June Allyn. Cranston continued to watch Jeff Byrd all the time Commissioner Weston was questioning the two women.

"What about you, Mrs. Paulson," Weston said gently, "do you have any idea why George was in London?"

"None at all, Commissioner," Alma Paulson said. "George was a good boy, but he was not the kind who talked much to his mother. He was a strong man, Commissioner, you remember. He never did like to involve me in what he did, he

always said he didn't want me to worry. The last I heard from him was almost two weeks ago. He wrote from New Guinea. He seemed happy and busy with his Peace Corps work out there. I'm sure he came here on some assignment for the Peace Corps."

"I'm afraid not, Mrs. Paulson," Weston said.

"Well, I know one thing," Alma Paulson said. "I know that whatever reason George had for coming to London it was a good reason."

"I'm sure it was," Commissioner Weston said. Weston glanced at Cranston. The socialite knew what Weston was thinking about—the thousand pounds hidden in Paulson's shoe, and the pistol that Paulson should not have had.

"What about you, Miss Allyn?" Weston said to the beautiful blonde fiancée.

June Allyn sat beside Mrs. Paulson, her slender arm still around the older woman's shoulders. She, too, had been crying, but there was something more than sorrow in the girl's eyes. There was anger, even hatred, and a peculiar wariness. Cranston turned his attention from Byrd to June Allyn. The girl was definitely wary, apprehensive, as if she knew she would be asked questions and did not want to be asked. She sat close to Mrs. Paulson, almost clinging to the older woman, as if for support.

"I don't know why George came here either, Commissioner," June Allyn said. "He didn't tell me, or call, or anything."

"When was the last time you heard from him?" Weston asked.

"Well..." the girl hesitated, "well, I think it was about a week ago, yes. He wrote to me a week ago. He said he was busy. He said he was making a special trip into the interior of New Guinea, and that it was important. He seemed excited. That was the last time I heard from him."

As he watched the girl, and listened to her, Cranston was struck by the tone of her voice when she insisted that the letter was the *last* time she had heard from Paulson. Her voice made a point of the word, *last*. The girl was indeed *insisting* that she had not heard again from Paulson before he died. She was insisting too much. No one had suggested that she had heard again from Paulson, but now Cranston was sure that she *had* heard from him again. The girl was definitely frightened and wary. But June Allyn's words had given Cranston something more important to think about—a special trip into the interior of New Guinea. Paulson had

been excited about a special trip he was about to make a week ago. He had now been dead a little over three days. With a day to travel from Sydney to London, and a day from New Guinea to Sydney, that meant that the special trip into the interior of the still-savage island had happened just before Paulson began the events that led to his death. Cranston had a strong idea that this was more than coincidence. Something had happened there in the interior of New Guinea that had started the entire chain of events that ended in murder in a dark London alley.

"Did Paulson say anything about that special trip, Miss Allyn?" Cranston asked. "Any hint as to why he was making it, or what was so special about it?"

"No, Mr. Cranston, he just mentioned it," June Allyn said.

"And he never contacted you again, say from right here in London?" Cranston said.

"No, I said he didn't!"

"So you did," Cranston said.

"I don't know why he came to London!" June Allyn cried.

Mrs. Paulson comforted the girl. "Of course you don't, my dear. Really, Commissioner, do you all have to badger the poor girl? She and George were to be married in three months."

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Paulson," Weston said, "but we do have to ask these questions. Scotland Yard has been kind enough to let us talk to you. If we don't ask these questions, Inspector Monk will."

"Of course, Commissioner, and we want to help all we can for poor George," Mrs. Paulson said.

"Then perhaps you'll tell us just where you were three days ago, Mrs. Paulson?" Weston said.

"Me?" the mother of the slain man said. "Why, I was at home! I was in America, of course, in Manhasset. That's where I live, you know that. You're not suggesting . . .!"

"We don't know why George was here, or what he was doing here," Weston said. "Until we do, we have to try to eliminate everyone he could possibly have intended to meet here."

"Well he wasn't meeting me! I told you he never discussed his affairs with me. Really, Commissioner!"

"I'm sorry, but I must ask," Weston said. He turned to the blonde girl. "What about you, Miss Allyn?"

"I was also in New York, I have my apartment there in the city," June Allyn said. "I was away in the Catskills for two days, and when I got back the Peace Corps contacted me

and told me about George. I flew right over here, as you know."

"We flew over together as soon as we heard about poor George," Mrs. Paulson said. "Who could have done it, Commissioner?! And why? Why! My poor boy, why did they kill him?!"

"We'll find that out, Mrs. Paulson," Commissioner Weston said to the distraught woman.

Margo walked to the crying older woman and touched her shoulder lightly.

"The murderer will be punished, Mrs. Paulson," Margo said.

Margo's blue eyes looked toward Cranston. The wealthy socialite alter-ego of The Shadow nodded grimly, his eyes for an instant burning with the hidden power of The Shadow. Then he became aware of the hard eyes of Jeff Byrd watching him. Byrd stared as if there was something about Cranston that he did not like. Or something that he thought he had seen, remembered. Cranston turned away casually and walked to the window of the hotel room. Was it possible that Jeff Byrd had recognized the mysterious figure of The Shadow beneath the impassive exterior of Lamont Cranston? Perhaps, but that had not happened often in the career of The Shadow. Still, there was something strange about Jeff Byrd. Yet only one person involved in the case of George Paulson had seen The Shadow—the unknown man in the Inverness cape who had searched the dark alley behind The Blue Admiral. Suddenly, Jeff Byrd swore aloud.

"Damn, but that's reassuring of you all! The murderer will be punished you say!" Byrd said angrily. "But what can you do about it? You're not even really on the case. It's an English matter, and what are they doing?! I tell you someone has to light a fire under them! If you don't, then I will!"

"They know their job, Byrd," Weston said shortly.

"Do they? I'm not so sure," Byrd cried. "All this damned idiocy about what George was doing in London! What does that matter? George was obviously killed by some two-bit mugger who wanted his money. Can't the damned British even catch a mugger?"

"As it happens, Inspector Monk agrees with you," Weston said. "I'm not sure we do."

"Agrees with me?" Byrd said.

"About it being a simple violent robbery," Weston said.

"Well then, that's something. They may even catch the little punk," Byrd said.

At the window Lamont Cranston was only half listening. He was looking out the window and down to the street. A dark green Cadillac was parked at the curb just across from the entrance to The Belvedere. It was the same type of car used by the man in the alley, only the color was not the same. And a color could be changed quickly by those with the means to change it. The keen vision of The Shadow showed Cranston that the driver of the car was a small, swarthy man. He could not tell if it were the same man, he had not seen the man who had shot at him that well, but this man was definitely as swarthy. Cranston was puzzled. It was The Shadow who had been involved with the men at the alley, not Lamont Cranston. Why would they be watching Cranston? He had had Stanley drop him a block from the hotel, in case his Rolls Royce might be recognized. But if the men in the Cadillac were not watching Cranston, what were they doing down there in the street?

Cranston turned from the window. There was nothing more to be done in the hotel room this night. He nodded to Margo, and turned to Commissioner Weston.

"It's late, Commissioner, and we have a big day tomorrow. I think Margo and I will return to our hotel."

"All right, Lamont. I'll just stay and talk to these people a little longer," Weston said. "There may be something about George's life they know but don't realize its importance. I especially want to ask Byrd about any activities George might have performed in the Peace Corps."

"Anything I can tell you, Commissioner," Jeff Byrd said.

Cranston and Margo left Commissioner Weston talking to Byrd and the women about the past life of George Paulson. If anything of importance was said, Weston would tell Cranston later. Now Cranston wanted to know if the green Cadillac were following him. When they reached the lobby, he told Margo to wait in the hotel, and walked boldly out the front door. He turned left and walked slowly down the street. From the corner of his eye he saw the green Cadillac start up and drive after him. He turned sharply into a cross street and sprinted a few yards. Behind him the green Cadillac came slowly around the corner, saw him running, and speeded up. Satisfied that the Cadillac was indeed following Lamont Cranston, he darted into the first crowded public house he passed. He walked rapidly to the Men's Room.

Inside the Men's Room Lamont Cranston worked rapidly. He reached into the secret pockets of his clothes. He brought

out a thick white false mustache, and a wig of thick white hair. Facing the mirror above the sink, Cranston stared into the mirror, the muscles of his face tense, straining. Slowly at first, and then with amazing rapidity, Cranston's face seemed to soften and flow into a new face. He quickly glued on the white mustache, put on the wig, and his whole body bent and twisted until Lamont Cranston had completely vanished and in his place stood a white-haired old man who looked nothing like Cranston unless someone had looked very closely into his eyes. With one last quick look into the mirror, Cranston took a small cylindrical object from his hidden pockets, manipulated it, and in his hands was a long, stout cane, its telescopic joints all but invisible. The old man with the cane turned and hobbled from the men's room.

In the crowded public room of the tavern the old man with the cane walked directly toward the door. Apparently the old man was intent only on his passage to the door, but actually he saw everything in the room. The small, swarthy man was standing in the center of the room looking at every face he could see. The swarthy man seemed puzzled and confused. The old man with the cane brushed past him, and walked out into the dark street. The green Cadillac was parked at the curb. The old man limped past it. Inside the car he saw a man seated in the back seat. The man was heavy, even fat, and tall, and his pulpy face was smooth and pale. The man held a silver-headed cane between his legs as he looked out toward the pub entrance. The fat man did not look twice at the old man with the cane.

The old man continued to limp along the street until he had returned to the main street where The Belvedere was. Then he walked more rapidly, The Rolls Royce appeared driving toward him. The old man looked carefully around before he climbed quickly into the rear seat of the Rolls Royce. Stanley drove off at once. In the back seat, Margo smiled at the old man.

"I think I like that disguise best of all, Lamont," Margo said. "Or should I always call you Phineas in that guise?"

"Always, Margo," Phineas Twambley, the old man with the cane, said as he let the muscles of his face relax, removed the white wig and mustache, and became again Lamont Cranston.

"The old man gathered much information," Cranston said grimly, "I know they were following Cranston. In case they are the same men who were in the alley, I prevented them

from connecting Cranston and The Shadow through this car. From now on Cranston will have to use a different car."

"Did you get a good look at them?" Margo asked.

"I did. The small, swarthy type could have been the chauffeur who fired at me. The fat man in the back seat could have been the one I didn't see. That Inverness cape hid him very well, but he has about the height of the man in the alley. He also has a silver-headed cane. Only..."

"Only what, Lamont?" Margo said.

"Only I have a peculiar feeling that I have seen that fat man before somewhere."

7

IT WAS past noon on a grey and misty day in London when the green Cadillac appeared again.

Lamont Cranston had risen early and gone to Scotland Yard to see Inspector Monk. The inspector had been out, and Superintendent Jones reported that Monk had not yet located anyone who had been on the flight from Paris and remembered Paulson. No one at London Airport remembered seeing Paulson. Jones had traced Paulson's flight from Sydney to Paris, but nothing he had yet found gave any hint as to why Paulson had left his post so suddenly and secretly.

"Tell me, Superintendent," Cranston said, "could Monk have known Paulson?"

"Monk? Why do you ask that?" Jones said.

"They were both policemen, Paulson had been in London before, and I don't think this is a simple case of violent robbery no matter how much Monk insists."

"Neither do I, Cranston, but if you're suggesting...!"

"Monk was at the scene of the crime at least five minutes before anyone from here," Cranston said.

"He was off duty, his house is closer to the East End than the Yard," Jones said.

"Then why did you assign him to the case? Surely you had inspectors who were on duty."

"Monk specializes in the East End, knows it like a book," Jones explained. "As a matter of fact he'd been out there earlier that night, on another case."

"How much earlier?" Cranston said.

"Until about seven o'clock, then he went home," Jones said. "Look, Cranston, I don't particularly like your coming in here and even hinting that Inspector Monk could be involved in any form of criminal activity, do you hear me?"

"Paulson came to London for some reason," Cranston said.

"I'm sure he did, and Monk will find the reason," Jones said.

"Does Monk know a man named Snatcher?"

"Snatcher Martin? We all know Snatcher," Jones said. "A petty criminal who will do just about anything for a shilling and give you tenpence change."

"I see," Cranston said.

"What about Snatcher Martin? See here, Cranston, if you know anything I suggest you tell us and quickly!" Jones said.

"Of course, Superintendent," Cranston said.

Cranston left the Yard, his mind working over the thought that Inspector Monk knew of Snatcher Martin. The Bombardier had found out about Snatcher possibly having Paulson's rings, then why hadn't Monk? It was possible that, with a murder involved, no police informant had dared even whisper to Monk about the Snatcher. The Shadow's agents, working in secret, could always find out more about criminal activities than the police. And Monk would be looking for a strongarm type. Bombardier himself had doubted that Snatcher was a killer. Cranston had no real reason to suspect Monk of any involvement, but until he knew why Paulson had come to London, he would suspect anything and everything.

Driving his own small, powerful Austin-Healey, the Rolls Royce hidden away for now, Cranston thought about Monk as he drove past the Houses of Parliament with Big Ben high in the tower through the misty grey day. He passed the ancient stone Abbey of Westminster, and drove through the quiet streets of Pimlico into Sloan Square with the glass edifice of Peter Jones on the far side. As he drove down Kings Road he had begun to think about Jeff Byrd, and decided to have Burbank check on the embassy official. When he reached The Lancaster, he parked his small car on the Kensington street of greystone old houses turned now into small hotels, and went directly to his office.

In the elegant office, Cranston instructed Margo to tell any callers that he was out. Then he went to the tall, Georgian secretary that dominated the left wall of the office. At a touch, the heavy piece of furniture swung silently from the

wall, and Cranston vanished inside. He stood listening in the narrow space between the wall and another wall. Sure that he was alone and unobserved, he pressed a button on the second wall and glided through the new opening into a room where a deep bluish light glowed from some unseen source. In the next instant Cranston had disappeared and The Shadow stood alone at a long instrument half hidden in the bluish glow. The long hand of The Shadow reached toward the silent instrument before him. The fiery girasol glowed brightly on his finger. Suddenly, without being touched, the machine in front of The Shadow began to hum and a face appeared on a small screen in the center. The face was bathed in the same bluish light.

"Report," The Shadow said softly.

"Mrs. Paulson checks out," Burbank reported, the contact man of The Shadow far away in New York in another secret room where a second special communication machine hummed. "Paulson had few friends, and fewer in the last year. He appears to have broken almost all contacts beyond his mother, his fiancée, and some government men. Everyone checks out clean."

"Miss June Allyn," The Shadow said. "Check her more carefully. Check her story of a trip to the Catskills. Also run a complete check on a Jeff Byrd, a minor official in the London Embassy."

"The Allyn girl was seen at the Catskill hotel where she claimed to be," Burbank intoned without a trace of inflection. "No Jeff Byrd appears in any record as a friend of Paulson."

"You are sure?" The Shadow snapped in the dim blue light of the hidden room.

"Quite sure. A Byrd, Geoffrey, appears as a classmate of Paulson's in High School, but no further contact is listed."

"Check it carefully," The Shadow instructed, "and study the times, hour by hour, involved in June Allyn's trip to the Catskills."

"Immediately," Burbank said.

The Shadow withdrew his hand and the glowing girasol from the proximity to the machine before him. The machine stopped humming, the screen went dark in the blue room. For a few moments The Shadow stood in thought in the deep blue light. Jeff Byrd admitted friendship with Paulson, admitted persuading Paulson to enter the Peace Corps, but no record of such a friendship appeared. Either Jeff Byrd was lying, which did not seem likely since both Mrs. Paulson and June Allyn apparently accepted him as a friend of the dead

man, or there was some reason why his name was not connected to Paulson in the records.

The Shadow quickly recrossed the hidden room and seemed to melt into the black wall. A few seconds later Lamont Cranston again stood in his elegant London office. It was then that the green Cadillac made its reappearance. Cranston had walked to his window to think more about Jeff Byrd, when he saw the Cadillac pull up behind his Austin-Healey below on the Street. The fat man got out and walked straight into The Lancaster. Cranston turned from the window and went to sit behind his desk. He did not have long to wait. Margo buzzed on the intercom.

"A Mr. Jasper Lorrington to see you, Lamont," Margo said.

"Send him in," Cranston said, and stood up to greet the immaculately dressed fat man who entered his office. The man still carried the silver-headed cane. He beamed at Lamont Cranston as he walked forward with his pale, thick, and fleshy hand extended.

"Ah, my dear Cranston," the fat man, Jasper Lorrington, said. "A pleasure indeed!"

"Mr. Lorrington," Cranston said. "Have a seat and tell me what I can do for you."

The fat man bowed adroitly for a man of his bulk, the fat hiding a remarkable speed and agility that was obvious to Cranston's trained eyes. Lorrington smiled his beatific smile from the chair facing Cranston's desk. There was a faint twinkle in the fat man's eyes. He cocked his enormous head sideways, and raised a thin eyebrow.

"Ah, my dear sir, you led me a merry chase last night, eh?"

"Last night?" Cranston said warily.

"A remarkable feat, you vanished into thin air," Lorrington purred. "I was hardly at all sure it was indeed you, hence my foolish waiting for you outside The Belvedere after I chanced to see you go in. It took me the devil's own time to locate your hotel this morning. Luckily I subscribe to a service that can find important businessmen who happen to be in town."

"You've found me," Cranston said, "now just why did you want to find me?"

The fat man chuckled. "As I thought, you don't remember me at all. After such good business, eh?"

Then Cranston remembered. Jasper Lorrington, a large dealer in wool and woolens. Headquarters in Scotland, business worldwide. Perhaps nine years ago he had negotiated a large order of special wool uniforms for the army of a South

American country that was involved with a battle against a highly organized rebel army in the high Andes. The Shadow had discovered the international plot against the country, and Cranston had supplied the needed uniforms for the cold mountain war. And it had been Jasper Lorrington who had been able to make full delivery across thousands of miles within four days. Cranston smiled now to himself. The fat man turned out to be no more than a business acquaintance of Lamont Cranston.

"Of course," Cranston said, "I remember well. I don't think you..."

"Were so fat? Ah, the penalty of success, I fear," Lorrington said with a chuckle.

"Business has been good?"

"Ah, my dear Cranston, I hardly have to tell you, do I? Prices climb each year."

"But supply has gone down, I heard," Cranston said.

"True, but not for those of us who really know the business, eh?" Lorrington said. "As a matter of fact, I wanted to see you to see if you might have another deal like those uniforms, eh? That was a nice, tidy transaction."

"I'm afraid not," Cranston said. He was beginning to wonder just how to get rid of the jovial fat man.

"Some other business brings you to London, eh? A pity. I was hoping it would be wool," Lorrington said.

"Some other business, yes," Cranston said.

"Ah then, I do have other interests, perhaps if you could tell me the nature of your interest this time?" Lorrington pursued.

Cranston's hooded eyes narrowed in his impassive face. As far as he knew Jasper Lorrington had no other business than wool. Lorrington was open and jovial, the model of an astute businessman trying to turn a profit with an old fellow businessman, and yet...! Was Lorrington attempting to find out just what Cranston was doing in London? Suddenly he recalled that he had made his wool deal in a private room in the Cobalt Club in New York, and Lorrington had met Commissioner Weston.

"I'm afraid it is quite private this time," Cranston fenced.

"Of course, I don't mean to pry. Still, I remember our association with considerable pleasure. Possibly you could allow me to know some of your plans?"

"Well, perhaps, if I knew just what it was you could offer. What other business are you in now? I might find a share for you."

"Ah, I can say I deal in almost any raw material that can be shipped. Now if..." Lorrington began.

"I'm afraid I don't need any raw materials," Cranston said quickly, watching the fat man closely.

Lorrington opened his mouth as if to make some quick answer and shut his mouth. The fat man smiled at Cranston. There was the amused twinkle in his small eyes again as he shrugged.

"Then I suppose we can't do business," Lorrington said smoothly. "A pity. It would not help me to know your business if I can't work with you, eh."

"No, it wouldn't," Cranston said.

He watched the fat man carefully. Lorrington had been about to say more after Cranston had said he did not need raw materials. Cranston was sure of that. But he could not be sure that Lorrington had been ready to offer almost any deal just to learn Cranston's supposed plans, or lack of plans of a business nature. He had tried to trap Lorrington into making some ridiculous statement that would prove that Lorrington was really only pumping him. Had the fat man seen the trap in time, or was he actually just interested in a business deal?

"Have you seen Commissioner Weston?" Cranston said.

"Weston? Is he in London, too? Well, well, I didn't know that. Ah, I remember our dinners at the Cobalt Club. A fine place. I've been thinking of joining, just to have the club when I go to New York."

"You must be doing well," Cranston said drily. His eyes were now on Lorrington's silver-headed cane.

"A millionaire's club, eh? Well, I think I could qualify quite easily now."

"Congratulations," Cranston said. "I seem to recall that the Soviet and the Chinese are big wool buyers now, is that true?"

"Quite true," Lorrington said. "I see you are admiring my cane, Mr. Cranston."

"It's a remarkable cane," Cranston said evenly. "You don't see many these days like that."

"No," Lorrington said. "Would you care to examine it?"

"Of course," Cranston said.

He took the cane from the fat man. Cranston was fully aware that the fat man could be trying to trap him now. If the fat man had been the man in the alley, or had been working with the man in the alley, he would know that only The Shadow would know about the sword in the cane. He examined the cane with care and admiration, making no

attempt to ascertain if it were, indeed, a sword cane. He admired it from every angle, but did not test to see if the handle were loose or could be drawn out. He handed it back to Lorrington who now stood up. The fat man beamed again.

"Well, my dear Cranston, I will keep you no longer. I am sure your business is urgent. I can't tell you how pleased I am to meet you again despite my disappointment. Perhaps we will have the chance to work together again someday."

"I'm sure we will," Cranston said.

The fat man bowed low again, and walked from the office. After Lorrington had gone, Cranston sat for some time in thought. As Lamont Cranston he met many men who had no connection to the crime world of The Shadow. On the other hand, Lorrington had been more than a little interested in just what he was doing in London. Had Lorrington really been watching him, Cranston, or someone else? Perhaps Paulson's mother, or June Allyn, or Jeff Byrd, or even Commissioner Weston? If he had been tailing someone in the case, he might well appear in Cranston's office to attempt to throw off suspicion.

Cranston was still considering the possible reasons for Lorrington's call when Margo came into the private office.

"The fat man you vaguely knew, Lamont?"

"Yes, Margo. I did business with him on that South American revolt case, remember?"

"Of course, Jasper Lorrington," Margo said. "I do remember, Lamont. I suppose that eliminates him from this case?"

"I don't know, Margo. Perhaps it does, and perhaps it does not. He's a clever man, I think, and he might have guessed that my suspicions had been aroused last night."

"Did you check that cane?"

"Not in front of him," Cranston said. "Besides, it would have been a perfectly normal cane whether he was the man in that alley or not. He would not have come here with the sword cane, it would have been a duplicate."

"Of course you're right," Margo agreed.

"However, I think you would do well to investigate Mr. Jasper Lorrington," Cranston said slowly. "Not that I imagine you would find anything if he were connected somehow to Paulson. He would be too clever to leave any evidence."

"It might prove him to have no connection," Margo said.

"It might."

"What are you going to do now, Lamont?"

"I am going to take a well-earned steam bath and swim at

the Burgoyne Club, Margo. And then I am going to keep a late afternoon appointment for The Bombardier."

Margo went back to work to begin her investigation of Jasper Loring. Cranston left his office and drove his small Austin-Healey to the fine old building of the Burgoyne Club. There he had a whisky at the elegant bar of the fine club, and went to soak in the steam room before taking his daily swim. He had four hours before his appointment for The Bombardier.

8

ENGLAND is a northern country. It is far north of New York, and in the winter the sun barely rises above the houses. Now, in the late afternoon, the sun that had come out briefly after the noon hour of the grey winter day was already down below the level of the grimy old brick houses of the East End. The people on their way home from work shuffled through a grey and smoky mist that hung over the narrow stone streets. Buses passed red and blowing their horns. The shops were crowded with the evening shoppers. In the East End there were no deep freeze units, and few refrigerators, and little money to buy food far in advance. Here the people bought tonight's meal tonight, and hoped there would be another meal tomorrow. And yet they were not a despondent people, their laughter and voices raised all through the misty evening winter streets.

The Snatcher saw and heard neither the laughter nor the poverty. He was too busy. He walked along the market street rapidly and yet very carefully. His eyes darted left and right and behind him. Alert, he watched for the police, or for his enemies, or for his friends, or for anyone or anything else that could mean danger or trouble to him. His scrawny body wrapped in the grimy raincoat worn by most of the men in these streets, he carried a small package hidden inside the coat, and he was ready to run at the first bare hint of danger. As he walked along the misty street he attempted to appear elaborately casual. He was well-known in the district, and he never knew when a policeman might stop him just on the off-

chance that he would be carrying something he had stolen. This night he particularly did not want to be stopped. The rings inside the package in his pocket had come from the fingers of a murdered man, and all his instincts told him he should have thrown them away. But his other instincts, greed and hunger, made him keep them just a little longer. The Bombardier was not a man Snatcher trusted particularly, actually he trusted no one at all, but he needed money and the rings were good jewelry.

This night he was in luck. No one stopped him. He reached his shabby building without incident. Too smart to keep such dangerous loot in his own room, he had hidden the rings far from where he lived, and had been forced to risk the trip through the crowded evening streets. But now he had reached where he lived, and the trip was over. The danger was not over. Snatcher Martin had lived and survived too long in this city jungle to relax even in his own home. His room was in the rear of the shabby old building. It was reached through a wide archway entrance to a cobblestoned courtyard that had once been the carriage yard of an inn in the better days of this part of London. Stairs led up from all sides of the courtyard to the small and drafty rooms where men like Snatcher Martin existed. But Snatcher did not enter the courtyard directly. Instead he slid carefully through the archway pressed close to the perpetually damp walls. Once inside the archway, Snatcher lurked in the deepest shadows close to the stone walls of the inner courtyard.

He remained hidden in the shadows for some time, his furtive eyes seeing all that moved inside the courtyard.

At last he reached the stairway that led directly up to the inner hallway that led to his room. He climbed the stairs as carefully as he did everything else, his small feet making no sound at all. At the top his quick eyes searched up and down the hallway with its single dim bulb swinging gently from a long cord. The swinging cord caught his eye. Why was it moving? Snatcher listened. He heard the familiar sound of shoes dropping to the floor in the room next to his. The dockworker who lived next to him had just come home minutes before. He knew because the first thing the big dockworker did was remove the shoes from his tired feet. He had not seen the man enter the building because there was another entrance from the side street. With the moving light explained (the dockworker was a big man and always forgot about the hall light until his head hit it) Snatcher walked

softly down the hall to the door of his room. Carefully, he checked the door. It was still locked. It had the type of lock that had to be locked with a key either inside or outside. With one last look up and down the dim hallway, and a few seconds with his ears alert for any sounds, Snatcher Martin entered his room.

The door locked behind him, Snatcher finally relaxed. The ratlike man took the package of rings from his pocket and laid it on top of his broken chest-of-drawers. He hung up his raincoat and put the kettle on for his evening cup of tea. He placed a cracked cup and saucer on his bare wood table, a knife and fork and spoon, and a plate with a cold meat pie on it. The Bombardier was not due for half an hour, and Snatcher was going to have his evening meal before The Bombardier arrived. The little man looked at the table for a long minute, and then went to his single cupboard and brought out a full bottle of whisky. He carried the bottle and a glass to the table. By this time the kettle had begun to boil. Snatcher carried the teapot to the kettle, warmed the pot with a little hot water, added the tea, and poured the pot full of the boiling water. He carried the steaming pot back to the table. He sat down and began to open the whisky bottle. Suddenly, he stopped, his hands frozen on the neck of the whisky bottle. His sharp eyes began to dart around the room. The dark was Snatcher Martin's home, and he had not turned on the light in his dim grey room. Now some sixth sense that was as much a part of Snatcher as his eyes or ears told him that there was danger in the room. His searching eyes stared at a dark, indistinct shadow in the darkest corner of his room where a small alcove was hidden from the light from the window. The shadow seemed darker than usual to Snatcher Martin. Then Snatcher turned as pale as death—the dark shadow itself seemed to move, and two burning eyes were suddenly looking directly at Snatcher.

"I have come for the rings, Snatcher Martin."

The eerie voice seemed to boom in Snatcher's ears. The ratlike little man did not move, but his darting eyes flicked in all directions, looking for some escape. With his usual caution he had locked his door, and all his years of living on the edge of disaster told him that he would not have time to unlock the door. His window was shut. There were no other exits from the room.

"Do not try to escape, Snatcher Martin. You cannot escape The Shadow!"

Snatcher only partly heard the mocking words from the dark shadows in the corner of his shabby room. His cunning mind was working feverishly. There was no escape from the room. There was nowhere to run. There was no place to hide. There was only one way. The Snatcher suddenly darted for his chest-of-drawers and jerked open the bottom drawer. When he turned like a cornered rat to face the mocking voice, there was a thin, gleaming blade in his hand.

"Would you kill me as you killed George Paulson?" the eerie voice mocked. "You are a fool, Snatcher Martin, an evil fool!"

As Snatcher Martin stood there, half-crouched and the knife in his hand, he saw the dark shadow of his room move again, grow, and become a tall figure cloaked in black that stood only a few feet away. Snatcher saw a hawk nose and the two fiery eyes. A ring glowed red on the finger of the towering figure. Snatcher looked at the ring, and at the burning eyes. The little man snarled and sidled a step toward the black apparition. He raised his knife—he tried to raise his knife. His arm would not move. He blinked, rubbed his eyes with his free hand, and tried to raise his knife again. His hand came up, and it was empty. He stared at his hand. On the floor where it had dropped from his fingers the knife lay with its shining blade reflecting the glowing red light of the giant black figure's ring. Snatcher Martin collapsed on the floor beside his useless knife.

The mocking laugh of The Shadow echoed wierdly through the dim room above the now dark evening streets of London.

"You are an evil man, Snatcher Martin, and The Shadow punishes evil."

On the floor the Snatcher did not move. He lay there shivering, his scrawny body shaking with fear. He did not ask who the mysterious figure in black was, he did not care. All danger was one to Snatcher Martin. The devil himself was only another danger, no different from a policeman or a fellow criminal who wanted what the Snatcher had. Angel or devil, it was all the same to Snatcher—a danger to be avoided. And even now, trembling on the floor of his grimy room in the faint grey light, his terrified mind searched for escape. He did not care why the chilling figure was in his room. He knew only that the unknown creature knew about the rings, and that was danger enough.

"He told," Snatcher Martin mumbled. "The Bombardier ratted on me. I'll kill him!"

"As you killed Paulson?" The Shadow demanded.

"I don't know no Paulson," Snatcher mumbled where he lay on the floor.

The voice of The Shadow boomed through the silent room above the London slum streets.

"You lie, Snatcher Martin! The man you killed in that alley was George Paulson! A good man who worked for the good of the world, and you killed him for a few trinkets!"

"I didn't kill no one! I ain't done nothing! The Bombardier is a liar!"

The Shadow crossed swiftly to the chest-of-drawers and picked up the small package. His quick fingers tore it open and two rings lay in his hand. One was a large diamond set in a thick, pale gold. The other was a strange ring, a grotesque carved head in miniature with a shining green emerald in the open mouth. The emerald was rough and uncut, and the head had been carved from bone. The Shadow studied the two rings for a moment. In that brief instant, Snatcher Martin suddenly leaped up and dashed for the door. Quick as the small man was, The Shadow was quicker. As Snatcher Martin reached the door, his key in his hand, The Shadow stood like a giant black wall in his path. The eyes of The Shadow burned into Snatcher and the small man stopped. The Shadow laughed his chilling laugh.

Snatcher Martin whirled and dashed for the closed window. He stumbled in his frantic haste, knocked over a chair, and when he reached the window, The Shadow was there in front of him. The black figure shut out all light from the single window as his laugh echoed and reechoed through the room. Snatcher Martin stared at the black figure, turned as if to try again for the door, and stopped. The small man trembled like a fallen leaf in a cold winter wind.

"Sit down!" the chilling voice of The Shadow said.

Snatcher Martin walked to his single table and sat down. The cold meat pie lay on the plate beside the teapot that had grown cold. The whiskey bottle stood untouched.

"You killed Paulson for these rings!" The Shadow said coldly.

"No," Snatcher said, his voice low and shaking.

"The police will know they are Paulson's rings. This one, the emerald with the carved head is from New Guinea. There is no doubt that they were Paulson's rings."

"I found them," Snatcher Martin said.

"You will go to prison for a long time for the theft alone!"

"Turn me in then, go ahead, whoever you are!"

"I am The Shadow, Snatcher Martin, I avenge the innocent and punish the guilty. You can evade the law, but you cannot escape The Shadow. Perhaps I will not tell the police."

The head of the ratlike little man jerked up. A faint light came into his eyes. Snatcher had lived all his life on the smallest of hopes, on the straw that appeared suddenly and could be clutched, held to. Now he heard a glimmer of hope in The Shadow's voice, a tiny straw to be clutched at eagerly.

"Tell me the truth! Tell me all that happened in the alley that night," The Shadow said.

Where he sat at his bare wood table, Snatcher hesitated. His eyes still searched for some escape, any way out, but there was no way. He shifted in his chair, his scrawny body screaming for relief, for some escape. His hands rested on the untouched whisky bottle. When he spoke at last, his voice was small and broken. The truth did not come easy to Snatcher Martin, but if it were the only way, he would take it.

"He was lying there when I went out," Snatcher said. "I'd seen him in the bar, see? He had this big bag, and he took it with him. When he didn't come back for maybe half an hour, I went back to look. I opened the door and saw him lying there in the alley. I think I heard someone running away, only I ain't sure. So . . ."

"He was already dead?" The Shadow said.

"I guess so, I didn't even know he was dead. He stunk of whisky, I thought he was just drunk. I figured he'd been hit and rolled, maybe. So I looked him over real quick. I found he was carrying a pistol, so I just grabbed the rings and beat it. I never even knew he was dead until the next day when the barman told me! When I thought about it, I knew I'd been stupid to think he was drunk, you know? I mean, he hadn't had but one beer in the bar, see? He must have been doused with the whisky."

"You saw no one else in that alley?"

"Well, like I told you, I thought I heard someone, only I didn't see anyone. His bag was gone, you know?"

"You took only the rings? You didn't steal his wallet and his suitcase?" The Shadow demanded.

"I swear it! There wasn't nothing else! I frisked him quick, and he was cleaned out except for the rings. When I felt that pistol, I got away from there. I didn't want to get mixed up with a guy what carried a pistol, see?"

"Where was the pistol when you found him?"

"In a holster on his hip like," Snatcher said. "I got the hell out of there in a bloody fine hurry."

"Did he speak to anyone at the bar?"

"No one I saw, he just walked in carrying this bag, and he had one beer. He did kind of look up at the clock once or twice. When he went back to the gent's room he took his bag with him. That's what caught my eye, see? If I'd known he was a goner I'd never of gone near him!"

"You don't know a dead man when you touch him?" The Shadow demanded.

"Well now, I guess he wasn't dead yet. I mean, he was still breathing. Kind of heavy like, just the way a bad drunk breathes. I guess he was just out, he must of died later."

"So you took the rings and ran?"

"Yeah, that's all! I wish I'd never seen those rings, see? I figured I was in luck, I got to take all the luck I can find. All I did was grab the rings I figured the real strongarm lad had forgotten. Now I can't ever sell them, and everyone's after me! I thought I was in luck, see? Two lousy rings and the whole stinking city's asking questions."

Snatcher brooded in the dark room over his bad luck. He looked at the untouched whisky bottle, and then reached for it. His shaking hands poured the amber liquid into the single glass on his bare wood table. His mind seemed to be still thinking of the ill luck that had brought him to steal two rings from a man who turned out to have been murdered.

"Who else has been asking questions?" The Shadow said sharply.

"Who ain't been asking? I wish I'd never seen them rings. The cops nosing around everywhere. That damned Inspector Monk after everyone. Bombardier pumping me. The fence won't buy. The *eye-tie* bending my ear in every damn bar . . ."

"*Eye-tie*? You mean an Italian?" The Shadow said quickly.

"He looked Eye-talian to me. Dark like, you know?"

"He was asking about the rings?"

"Nah, he didn't care about the rings, I could tell. He wanted to know what else I got, just like you."

"Was there anyone else? A fat man? Think, Snatcher!" The Shadow insisted in the dark and barren room above the slum street.

"No one else."

The scrawny little man took a deep gulp of his whisky. He shuddered as the raw liquid burned his throat. Then, suddenly, he began to whine.

"You'll gimme a break, see? I told you all I know. You can keep the rings, see? I wish I'd never seen 'em anyway, I want to get shut of them, see?"

"Tell me exactly what this Italian asked you!"

"Gimme a break, all right? He was dead, I didn't do nothing. I just . . ."

Snatcher Martin raised his whisky glass again as he whined in the dark room to the looming figure of The Shadow that towered over him. He raised his glass to his lips as he spoke. The glass fell from his fingers. His rat eyes widened. His thin body stiffened, bent as if suddenly smashed by some powerful blow, twisted into a gasping, clawing curve. Snatcher fell from the chair. On the floor he writhed in agony, his body twisted into an agonized curve, his eyes bulging, his mouth open and gasping.

The Shadow leaped to the fallen man. The black figure of the Avenger bent over the stricken petty thief. Snatcher's bulging eyes stared in horror, fear, terror and hate. The pain-wracked eyes looked once toward the bottle of whisky that stood on the table in the darkness. The gasping lips moved.

" . . . *eye-tie* . . . the *Eye-tie* . . . damned . . . lousy . . . oh . . . oh God . . ."

Snatcher Martin was dead.

For a long minute The Shadow remained bent over the body of the ratlike little man. The body was grotesquely twisted, the eyes bulging in violent death. The Shadow stood up and stepped silently to the bare wood table. His long fingers, with the girasol ring glowing a fiery red in the dark room, picked up the bottle of whisky. His hawklike nose sniffed at the bottle. He tasted a drop of the innocent-looking liquid. Then he placed the bottle back on the bare table. He glided across the dark room to the window. At the window he stood and raised the glowing red girasol toward his hawklike face. His eyes stared deep into the rare fire-opal on his long finger.

No more than five minutes later there was a light tapping on the door of the dead Snatcher Martin's room. The Shadow crossed to the door and opened it. The muscular figure of The Bombardier stood there, the small opal on the ex-fighter's finger glowing faintly at The Shadow's summons.

The Bombardier stepped silently into the room and closed the door.

9

THE BOMBARDIER looked down at the body of Snatcher Martin. His scarred eyes looked at the Shadow. The Avenger nodded grimly toward the bottle of whisky on the table.

"An alkaloid, probably strychnine," The Shadow said.

"In the whisky?" The Bombardier said.

The Shadow nodded again. "Given to him by some unknown Italian, I think. Someone he thought was Italian, a dark man. This dark man had been asking questions."

"About the rings?"

"No, Bombardier, about what *else* Snatcher might have stolen."

"And we know someone's still looking," Bombardier said.

"Yes," the grim voice of The Shadow said, "we know that they are still looking. We must now find out *what* they are looking for."

"What can I do?" The Bombardier asked.

"For now, I want the body of Snatcher Martin to be found elsewhere. With Snatcher dead, the police could well consider the case solved. I do not want the police to know about Snatcher or the rings for the time being."

"I'll handle that," The Bombardier said. "Then what shall I do?"

"Remain here and watch, Bombardier," The Shadow said. "We must look elsewhere for our answers now. It is time for me to take a trip, to begin at the beginning."

The Bombardier did not question The Shadow further. He had learned to obey his mysterious chief without question. Now he looked down at the body of Snatcher Martin to consider his task of ensuring that the dead criminal was not connected with the late George Paulson. When he looked up again, the room was silent. Bombardier switched on the single light. He was alone in the small room. The Shadow had faded into the night like a silent apparition. Bombardier was always surprised by the silent arrivals and departures of The Shadow, but he asked no questions, and now returned to the immediate problem of the disposal of Snatcher Martin's

body. He would hear from his chief again when he was needed.

Some four blocks away from the small room where Snatcher Martin had ended his shabby existence, a man walked out of one of the myriad alleys of the East End. One instant the street was empty, and the next moment the man had appeared. When he was sure that no one was watching him, he opened the door of the Austin-Healey and slid quickly in behind the steering wheel. He removed the cap and soiled raincoat, swiftly put on an expensive trench coat and a black homburg, and then sat back to finish his cigarette. Once again he was Lamont Cranston, wealthy socialite and businessman, sure that he could not be connected to the mysterious Shadow.

His cigarette finished, Cranston reached down to start the motor of the powerful little car. His hand reached the ignition switch—and went no further. Cranston froze behind the wheel. To his right, on the far side of the dark street, a man stood in the shadows in front of a cutrate book shop. The man had his back to Cranston, and in his hands he held a book picked up from one of the open bins in front of the shop. The book was open in the man's hands, but the man was not looking down at the book. The man was looking into the window of the shop—a dark window, with only a feeble and distant light behind it. A window that was very nearly as good as a mirror. The man was watching Cranston and the Austin-Healey. Cranston opened his car door casually, and started to step out of the car. Across the street the man suddenly put down the book, turned, and began to walk straight toward Cranston. Even before the man had put down the book and turned, Cranston had recognized him—Jeff Byrd, the minor embassy attache.

Byrd walked briskly across the narrow street to where Cranston had again sat back behind the wheel of the Austin-Healey. The tall, muscular embassy official was smiling broadly as he approached Cranston in the car. Cranston watched the fluid movements of the tall official. Byrd walked with smooth, powerful grace, the trained movements of a man who had complete control of his body at all times. There was an alertness to every motion, every aspect of Jeff Byrd. A sureness and a sense of rigid self-control. Cranston did not think that Jeff Byrd was a man who could be caught offguard often, if ever. Now the tall Embassy official reached the Austin-Healey and bent down to thrust his smiling head inside the car through the open window on Cranston's side.

"I wasn't sure, but I thought it was you, Cranston," Byrd said. "What are you doing in this neck of the woods?"

"Business," Cranston said. "My company has a warehouse here."

This was true, Cranston rarely appeared anywhere that he did not have a logical reason to be. The warehouse was only a few blocks away on the dark and muddy river.

"Lucky for me," Byrd said. "I thought it was your Austin-Healey. Now you can give me a lift back to The Belvedere, if you happen to be going that way."

"Get in," Cranston said.

He watched the tall man walk around the car to the seat on the left side nearest the curb. Byrd was saying that he had seen Cranston and the Austin-Healey in the dark window of the book shop, and had been watching to see if it really was Cranston. The story could be true. And yet, Cranston had had the definite impression that the tall official had not wanted to be seen. And how did Byrd know that Cranston drove an Austin-Healey? Last night Stanley had driven him to The Belvedere in the Rolls Royce. Today was the first day he had used the Austin-Healey. Still, the car was one Cranston often drove when he was in London, the people at the embassy might well know that he drove such a car. Then, what was Byrd doing here in the slums of the city, and how long had he been watching before Cranston saw him? It was possible that Byrd had seen Cranston arrive wearing the dirty raincoat and cap. Just in case, Cranston quickly placed the cap and dirty raincoat on the seat beside him as Byrd opened the car door to get into the seat. Cranston picked up the old raincoat and cap.

"Be careful, these are very dirty," Cranston said as he removed the dirty raincoat and cap from the seat, "My warehouse regalia. I don't think there is anything quite as dusty as a London warehouse."

"I imagine you're right," Byrd said as he sat in the car and closed the door on his side.

Cranston now started the powerful motor, and pulled away from the curb. Soon they were in a more crowded and lighted part of the city. As he drove, Cranston wondered just what Jeff Byrd had been doing in the dark slums of the city. Byrd did not keep him wondering long. The tall official talked easily, his flow of chatter light and innocent sounding. But in the small car, where the bucket seats were close together, Cranston managed to deftly touch Byrd on his right side exactly where he had seen the faint bulge last

night. With his infinite muscle control, he touched Byrd's side without the tall man being aware of it. Cranston felt the hard pistol in its holster. There was no doubt that Jeff Byrd, too, carried a pistol in a side holster on his right hip. The embassy man chattered on.

"The things we low men on the old totem pole at the embassy have to do," Byrd said. "You have no idea, Cranston. Take this little job. Here is this expatriate beat poet who lives in just about the worst dungeon you ever want to see, and I have to take time to go and ferret him out in his hole and see that he's not dying of dirt or starvation. All because his dear worried mother asked her solicitous Congressman to find out if her poor little boy was all right over here in this benighted foreign land!"

"A poet?" Cranston said.

"Allegedly," Byrd said with a derisive snort. "For my money he's a tramp who is afraid of work, the kind who gives the U.S.A. a bad name over here. But down I went to meet Waldo Mathias, poet, and find that he still was among the living. He was, him and his pet cockroaches in that hole. Now I will go to my desk and pen a missive to his sainted mother and reassure her that her little boy is fine."

"And you just happened to see me?" Cranston asked.

"Lucky, wasn't it? Actually, I wondered if you've heard anything more about George's death?" Byrd said.

"The police haven't found anything more yet," Cranston said. "Has the embassy learned what he was doing here?"

"Not a clue," Byrd said. "It's funny, too, because it wasn't like George to leave his post without notice. I don't know, Cranston, but I'm sure there's more to this than meets the eye."

"I thought you were convinced it was a simple robbery?"

"In a way, but I really only said that for the benefit of Mrs. Paulson and June. They thought the world of George, I wouldn't want them to know if he had been up to anything he shouldn't have been. Still, when you come down to it, no one seems to have come up with any reason for his murder other than robbery."

Cranston listened in silence. He had no intention of telling Byrd what The Shadow had learned from the dead Snatcher Martin—that the killer had not taken Paulson's rings, as any thief would have done just as Snatcher did, and that there were people still looking for something that Paulson seemed to have had. There was something peculiar about Byrd, and

Cranston did not want to give the embassy man any information at this point.

"Unless the police know something they aren't telling us," Byrd said.

"What do you think that could be?" Cranston said.

"I don't know, Cranston, I'm not a policeman, but George was in the East End for some reason," Byrd said. "I hadn't heard from George in almost six months."

"And you were close friends," Cranston said, remembering Burbank's report that Jeff Byrd's name didn't appear in any records as a close friend of Paulson.

"We went to school together, and after that we lost touch until I ran into him again about a year ago and he was interested in the Peace Corps. He knew I worked for State, and asked me about the Peace Corps. I persuaded him to join. After that, and even when he went out to New Guinea, we kept in touch for a time, but it was almost six months now since I heard from him."

"What do you think that could mean?"

"Maybe he was mixed up in something," Byrd said. "He must have met a lot of criminals on the New York force. I don't know, Cranston, I hate to say anything against George, but there's something fishy about all of it. I mean, maybe he was killed by a robber, but why was he there? Why was he in London at all, and why didn't he call me?"

Behind the steering wheel, Cranston pondered what Byrd was saying. Presumably Byrd knew nothing about either the gun Paulson had been carrying, or the thousand pounds in Paulson's shoe. Yet Byrd, a supposed friend, was definitely suggesting that Paulson could have been mixed up in something illegal. Was Byrd guessing, or did the embassy man know more than he was saying? Paulson's actions had been peculiar enough for Byrd to make a good guess. On the other hand, Byrd himself was a peculiar man as far as Cranston could see, and the story of the mission to the poet for the mother in America could be just a cover for being in the East End where Paulson had been killed.

"If he was mixed up in anything wrong, Byrd, why would he have called you?" Cranston said. "You just said he hadn't talked with you for six months or so."

"No reason, I suppose," Byrd agreed. "It just seemed logical he would call me, but I guess he didn't have time."

"Perhaps not," Cranston said.

By now they had reached The Belvedere, and Cranston

slowed the powerful little car and stopped in front of the elegant hotel. Jeff Byrd got out. As he started for the wide entrance to the lobby, he stopped and turned back.

"Then there's nothing I can tell the women?" Byrd said.

"You can tell them that the killer will be caught," Cranston said.

"Of course," Byrd said. "I just hope that when he is caught, it doesn't turn out even worse for George."

"The truth is never worse, Byrd," Cranston said.

"I suppose not," Byrd said.

The tall man turned on his heel and strode off into the elegant hotel. Cranston's eyes flared for an instant like the eyes of The Shadow as he watched Byrd vanish into the bright lobby. Then he gunned his powerful motor and roared away into the London night toward The Lancaster and his office. The quiet Kensington streets were empty in the cold night as Cranston parked the Austin-Healey. He left the car parked on the street. It was part of the plan The Shadow had decided on in the dark room of the dead Snatcher Martin.

In Cranston's office, Margo was waiting. The beautiful, dark-haired woman was serious as she followed Cranston into his private office. She locked the office door behind her, and turned to face Cranston.

"Any report from Burbank yet, Margo?"

"Not yet, Lamont. He seems to be having more trouble than usual on Byrd and the Allyn girl," Margo reported. "What happened with Snatcher Martin?"

"He's dead, Margo. Killed in front of The Shadow by poisoned whisky. I should have realized that he might be in danger."

Cranston related the entire sequence of events with Snatcher Martin. Margo listened intently. When Cranston mentioned that Bombardier was disposing of the body so that the police would not yet know of the dead criminal's connection to the case, she nodded that she understood.

"It is obvious now, Margo," Cranston went on, "that Paulson was killed for something he *had*. Snatcher Martin was killed because he had met one of the men involved in Paulson's death, a dark, Italian-looking man. I should have guessed that Martin would be in danger, he had been there in the alley that night. Either he saw too much that night, or the killers thought he had what they wanted. He claimed he saw nothing, but I doubt if they would take the chance that he had. So they questioned him, and then killed him."

"Then you're convinced that robbery had nothing to do with Paulson's murder?" Margo said.

"I'm sure it didn't," Cranston said.

"What's your plan, Lamont?"

"The entire key is what was Paulson doing here in London," Cranston said. "It's been the key all along. Now we know that he was carrying something. Presumably it was what brought him here, and presumably he got whatever it was in New Guinea. I think The Shadow must go to New Guinea, start at the beginning. I think we've done all we can from this end."

"What could it have been?" Margo asked.

"New Guinea is still a savage land, Margo. It's wild and desolate, almost anything could be hidden. There is gold there, and perhaps diamonds. Almost anything, Margo. Don't forget that thousand pounds in Paulson's shoe, and the fact that he was armed. I think he expected some kind of trouble."

"What can I do, Lamont?"

"First, check on Jeff Byrd here. I want to know if he really went to see a young American named Waldo Mathias. I'm sure he did, he seems too smart to be caught in such a simple lie. But you might try to check his time table, he may have stayed only a few minutes with Mathias."

"Very well, Lamont."

"Second, I'll want you to do some acting for me. Lamont Cranston is deeply involved in this case, and I would be very surprised if our killer, or killers, did not know that. I don't want them following me to New Guinea. And I don't want the police to know where I'm going. They would probably insist I don't go, and they could stop me officially."

"If you go in secret you might be recognized."

"Yes, Margo, but Kent Allard could go unnoticed."

"Of course, Lamont, as Allard you've been to New Guinea many times."

"Exactly. I think it is time for Kent Allard to embark on another expedition to New Guinea. A solo trip to prepare for a future full safari."

"Won't you be missed here, Lamont?"

"That is where you must do some acting," Cranston said. "We will supply a substitute Cranston. Stanley will take my place in disguise. You will go with him everywhere to enhance the deception. Our only problem will be Commissioner Weston, and I think we can have Burbank arrange to have

the Commissioner called back to New York early tomorrow. No one else here knows me so well that the disguise wouldn't work."

"I can see to it that no one actually stays too close to Stanley," Margo said.

"Good. Let them see him, but make sure 'Lamont Cranston' remains very busy with his own business affairs. The deception should be enough for anyone who happens to be watching us."

"You'll be alone, Lamont," Margo said. "You will be careful? Even The Shadow isn't proof against a bullet. These men don't hesitate to shoot."

"As I found out in that alley," Cranston said. "But don't worry, Margo. Now, call Stanley and we can get started. I want to take an early jet tomorrow."

Margo unlocked the door and went to her telephone to call Stanley. Alone in his private office, Lamont Cranston strode to the tall, Georgian secretary that hid the secret entrance to his hidden room. He vanished through the wall and into the room with the black walls and glowing blue light. There he sat down at a long cabinet and opened the drawer marked: Kent Allard. He checked the listing in the drawer which showed exactly where Kent Allard was supposed to be at this moment, and just what the internationally renowned explorer had been doing since the last time the Shadow had appeared as Allard. The record showed that Allard had last appeared in Sea Gate, New Jersey, on the Anton Pavlic case. Since then the world-famous explorer had been resting at his mountain-top home on the uplands of Kenya.

With this indelibly fixed in his photographic mind, Cranston went to work. A special dye transformed his light hair into the dark hair of Kent Allard. The dye could not fade or wash out, but could be removed instantly by a special solvent if necessary. A few deft strokes with a hairbrush changed Cranston's side-parted hair into Allard's brushed-back hair without a part. He applied a false dark mustache that would serve his purpose since he did not have time to grow one as he would normally do to become Kent Allard. Then he filled a small hypodermic needle with a harmless, wax-like fluid. He injected the special fluid beneath the skin of his nose, changing the hawk-like nose into a thicker heavier nose. He left the cabinet and went to a hidden closet from which he took a complete change of clothes. He hung up the expensive and conservative clothes of Lamont Cranston, and donned the

more sporting clothes of Kent Allard: a cashmere sport jacket with the leather elbow patches, grey whipcord trousers, chukka boots, and bright wool shirt with dark tie that Allard liked to wear. Then he returned to the cabinet, placed a small mirror on the cabinet top, and concentrated all his powers. The face of Lamont Cranston vanished beneath the dark mustache, and the controlled facial muscles of The Shadow flowed into the face of Kent Allard.

When Stanley entered the secret blue room with Margo, Kent Allard limped slightly as he went to meet them. He seemed much shorter than Lamont Cranston, his powerful shoulders bent from the years of carrying heavy loads on his many expeditions. The limp was from a tiger attack many years ago in the High Himalayas—an attack carefully reported in the press at the time, and Allard's limp was well known. When The Shadow was Allard, the limp came back automatically, it was part of Kent Allard. Now he limped as he went to work on the transformation of Stanley into Lamont Cranston. Margo left the secret room to begin the arrangements for Kent Allard's flight to New Guinea.

10

THE INDONESIAN diplomat recognized Kent Allard immediately. The dark little man sat in the seat beside Allard on the giant BOAC jet. From London to Bombay the Indonesian boasted of the advances made by his country under its "great man" Sukarno. After the jet left Bombay and its teeming millions behind, they flew over the great sub-continent of India, its steaming jungles like a smoky green blanket far below. The Indonesian left the jet at Jakarta, and Kent Allard dozed in his seat as the jet flew on over the old Dutch East Indies and the ancient pirate seas into the summer of the southern hemisphere. When Allard awoke again the giant aircraft was over Sydney and the great arch of the Sydney Bridge loomed high above the water far below.

Customs cleared, Kent Allard took a taxi straight to the regional office of the Peace Corps. The director, Mr. Weldon Rowe from Kansas City, was more than worried when he

waved Allard to a seat. The famous explorer had called from the airport and asked about George Paulson. Now that he was in Sydney there was no need to disguise his interest in Paulson, especially since Kent Allard had a legitimate and logical interest in Paulson.

"I've been at my Kenya house," Allard explained as he sat down facing the worried official. "I plan another trip into the New Guinea interior. George and I have many mutual friends in New York, and I had planned to see him while I was in New Guinea. There is an almost unexplored area he and I are both interested in, or were. I only learned of his death just before I left New York."

"A terrible thing," Weldon Rowe said. "We've never had any such incident before in the Peace Corps. It would have to happen in my jurisdiction! It could give us all a terrible name."

Allard watched the man. Rowe was obviously more concerned about his reputation than Paulson's tragic death.

"It did worse for Paulson," Allard said drily.

"Well, damn it, what was he doing in London anyway? He comes down here without warning, leaves his post without any explanation, and goes to London! Think of the publicity! All our good work will be forgotten because one man was mixed up in something he had no right to be in!"

"Do you know that Paulson was involved in anything he shouldn't have been?" Allard said quickly.

"What? Well, no, not really. But why else would he run off in secret when I thought he was returning to his post?"

"He told you nothing at all?"

"Nothing! I had no idea he intended to do anything but return to his post. I have put that into writing already. My hands are clean."

Disgusted with the man who cared only about his own reputation, Allard left the Peace Corps office and began his preparations for the trip to New Guinea. The island was not the easiest place to enter. The officials were strict about who they allowed to go, but Kent Allard was well known, his good work on his previous expeditions cut all the red tape. His papers in order, he was able to charter his small plane the next morning. Allard always chartered the same plane. Max Halandann, the old bush pilot he had used so many times before, was delighted to see the famous explorer again. But the grizzled veteran pilot was, as always, a man of few words.

"How long we likely to be up there, Mr. Allard?" Max said.

"Not long this time, Max, I'm preparing the trip."

"Check," Halandann said.

"Say, three days, perhaps four," Allard said.

"Check," the veteran pilot said. "Good to see you again, Mr. Allard."

The small, agile aircraft flew low along the coast on its way north, the shining surf of Australia endless off to the right. Allard sat beside the veteran pilot, or took his turn at the controls—a privilege old Max would have granted to no one but Allard—all the way on the long trip up the coast. Toward evening Halifax Bay spread out below and they came down in Townsville where they would spend the night.

The next morning they were off early, following the Queensland coast as far as Cooktown, and then Halandann struck out across the Great Barrier Reef and the Coral Sea toward Port Moresby. Later, the coastline of New Guinea, Papua here, came into view. They set down in Port Moresby, where Allard took only time enough to determine just where Paulson had been working in the back country.

"He was down here when one of his boys brought word from up country," the Australian official said to Allard. "He hightailed it out like a ruddy big bird. That was, say, a little over a week ago now. Came back the same day and went skipping off to Sydney on a tail wind."

"Is his post far?" Allard asked.

"No, we don't let those Peace Corps chaps into the real back country, that's for explorer chaps like you who know what they're about, eh? Besides, real stone-age areas wouldn't be ready for Peace Corps work. Where are you thinking of going this time, Allard?"

"I think over near the Dutch border, past the Sepik headwaters. But I want to survey the areas alone first, get an idea of just where would be a good place for a new expedition."

"How long will you be up there?"

"I can't say, a week or so at least. I want to stop off at Paulson's post first."

"All right, just ask for anything you need. I should send some of my men with you, but in your case we'll waive it."

"Thank you," Allard said.

From Port Moresby they flew on north past the giant, cloud covered bulk of Mt. Victoria, turning more to the west until they finally reached the village north of Mugulo where George Paulson had directed the operations of the Peace

Corps volunteers. The post was in a great valley below the wall of the central mountains of the Bismarck Range. The people who greeted them as they stepped from the small plane on the makeshift airfield were small, and dark, and all but naked. No longer in the deep stone age, they had only recently left that ancient time, and still bristled with feathers, the curved tusks of boars in their noses, great round wooden nose-plugs making their placid faces almost fierce. They crowded around the small aircraft until two bushy-haired Papuan constables pushed their way through the crowd of one-time headhunters to greet Allard. With the two constables was a very young man from Connecticut. His name was Hiram Jones, and he had been Paulson's assistant at this particular post.

It was some hours later, the tropical sun already down, before Allard found out what he had come all the way from London to find. Young Jones was hungry for conversation, and they had been sitting over whisky and soda for quite some time before Allard could ask his questions.

"It's a deadly place, Mr. Allard," Jones said. "All we do is help them with medicine, improve the sanitation, and that's a losing battle, and try to teach English. I guess we're about the most primitive post in the whole Peace Corps."

"Did Paulson like the work?" Allard asked.

"Well, I guess so, he moved around a lot," Jones said. "You know, he was only here about six months. I don't think he stayed in one place longer than a few weeks. We have other posts all around here. He was Field Supervisor, I guess he had to get around."

"What brought him here so fast a week or so ago?"

"I found a mislabeled crate of supplies," Jones said. "I knew he was very concerned about those things, we've had a few others at all the posts. So I radioed him down in Moresby. He came right up as always."

"A mislabeled crate?" Allard said slowly.

Jones nodded. "A full crate of aureomycin. That's a broad-spectrum antibiotic, you know, and its damned important stuff up here. We use a lot of it with the diseases these poor people have. Well, I opened this crate and it was nothing but a whole crate of aspirin!"

"Aspirin instead of aureomycin?"

"Damned dangerous. We've had other bad crates, some of them looked enough like the real medicine that we used it and nearly killed some people. Once a case of morphine ampoules turned out to be saccharin ampoules!"

For some time Allard did not say anything. A case of aspirin mislabeled as aureomycin, and a case of saccharin ampoules mislabeled as morphine! The potential danger was obvious to Allard. It must have been equally obvious to Paulson.

"And you've had other such crates?" Allard said at last.

"Maybe ten all told in the area."

"And Paulson was concerned?"

"We all were, but Mr. Paulson especially. He had us all very alert for such mislabeled material. I guess he was preparing a report because he always wrote down all the details of each case. Only he was never excited like he was this time."

"He was excited this time?"

"He sure was. He studied that crate very carefully as always, only this time I think he found something. He was excited, and flew off to Moresby right away. He never came back. Then I heard about him being killed in London."

"Why didn't you report about the case of aspirin?"

"I did, but Sydney said he didn't even mention it to them," Jones said. "I guess it wasn't really that important."

"I suppose you're right," Allard said.

For another hour he sat with Max Halandann and young Jones finishing the whisky. Jones was more than reluctant to end the festivities in the hot and muggy jungle night. Outside the Peace Corps hut the whole night seemed to lay like a thick, wet blanket on the air. The mountains close by towered blacker than the sky. But Allard noticed little of the jungle night, or of Jones's conversation. He let old Max talk with the boy, and thought about mislabeled crates of medicine and George Paulson. Why hadn't Paulson reported whatever he had found in the crate to his superior in Sydney? Paulson had been concerned about the mislabeled crates, had apparently found something important, but had failed to report it. Instead he had dashed for London alone and in secret. Why? The thousand pounds in Paulson's shoe came to Allard's mind. He was well aware of the profit that could be made in selling aspirin as aureomycin, or saccharin as morphine! And Paulson had been armed with a pistol.

"Why did Paulson carry a pistol, Jones?" Allard said.

"A pistol? The Australians don't let us carry pistols, Mr. Allard. They don't want their precious natives shot. Only the constables are armed here."

Allard stood up. "Time we got some sleep, I'm afraid. I

want to start out early tomorrow. Is the plane gassed up, Max?"

"To the brim, Mr. Allard," Max Halandann said.

"Good, we go at dawn," Allard said.

He left then, and went to bed. But he did not sleep for some time. George Paulson had found something in a mislabeled crate of expensive medicine. What? Perhaps evidence of fraud? Some company cheating the government? And then what? Had Paulson grabbed at a chance to make some money, perhaps by blackmailing some company? Or was it the other way around—was Paulson part of some fraudulent operation and was watching the mislabeled cases to be sure that there was no evidence, that it would be reported a simple error of labeling? He had not reported the case in Sydney. Still puzzling over all this, Allard at last went to sleep. He awoke early, the tropical dawn just about to rise up suddenly the way dawn did in the tropics. He dressed quickly, and awoke Max Halandann. The veteran pilot went to make a final check on the aircraft the moment they had finished breakfast. Allard talked one more with young Jones to be sure that Jones did not know what it was Paulson had presumably found in the mislabeled crate. He told Jones that he and Halandann were flying on to the west to visit some other areas of New Guinea. That, of course, was a lie. Allard was now in a hurry to return to London. He left the Peace Corps man on the porch of his jungle hut, and walked out across the field beneath the towering mountain wall toward the waiting aircraft.

He was halfway across the field, alone in the field except for the crowd of curious natives gathered a hundred yards away around the aircraft, when he saw the native. The man was small and muscular, stark naked, and wearing two white boar's tusks in his flared nostrils. He was no more than fifty feet from Allard when he started to run. He ran straight toward Allard, his face glistening with sweat even in the cold dawn. His mouth was open and screaming. In his hand he had a long, ugly stone axe. But it was his eyes that Allard saw most clearly. Wide, white, rolling, glassy eyes filled with an insane glare. Allard stopped in his tracks. He had seen eyes like that once before in Malaya. The savage was running *amok!*

Amok! A word, sound, that struck terror into the most brave. *Amok!* Mindless, fearless, insane savagery that attacked all in its path, slashing and stabbing and destroying anyone

in its way. When a man ran amok there was nothing that could stop him, nothing he feared, nothing he thought of in his crazed mind but to kill, smash, destroy all that he came near. A state of possessed trance, amok, as if demons existed and had invaded a man's mind and soul, taken complete possession, until he was no longer human, could no longer be hurt or stopped like a human. A frenzied trance that could take a man through a hail of bullets, literally shot dead but still running. In the ancient days of the Vikings they had called it going *berserk*—a warrior slashing all that faced him, thrust-through many times himself but not stopping until there was nothing more in front of him to kill, and then, and only then, falling dead in his tracks. An invulnerable trance, a blind power of a possessed mind that the great Master Chen T'a Tze himself had never doubted. *The mind can do anything to the body*, the Master had said, *if the mind believes!*

All this went through the mind of Kent Allard in the split second that he saw the amok savage racing toward him, his trance-crazed eyes rolling white, the murderous stone axe raised high. There were only two ways to stop an amok man: to break the trance somehow, or to knock the man down and stop his momentum, which, in the end, also broke the trance and was the same thing. Unarmed, and without the power to cloud men's minds that was his only in the guise of The Shadow, Allard stood alone in the field and faced the savage who raced toward him. There was no time to become The Shadow who could have stopped the man with ease. Allard searched the field for some club, some weapon to meet the attack. There was nothing. Max Halandann had seen what was happening, and was running toward Allard with a .45 automatic in his hand, but the veteran pilot was too far away. The amok native was almost on Allard. The explorer gathered his muscles, tensed, and with the amazing speed and control learned so long ago from The Master, met the full fury of the attack.

With lightning speed, Allard escaped the full rush of the native in the last second. Even as the axe struck, he attacked the native, gripped the sweating body, and hurled the crazed man to the ground with enough force in the judo throw to break the man's bones. The man howled in pain, rolled on the ground, came up and suddenly returned to the attack, his left arm dangling and broken. The dull but heavy axe still gripped in his good hand, the savage leaped at Allard again. Allard flicked his head a fraction of an inch. The axe grazed

past. He gripped the native once more, and sent him screaming to the ground for the last time. The savage tried to rise, his eyes still white and rolling, and fell back unconscious.

Max Halandann ran up, the old pilot's face deadly pale.

"Are you all right, Mr. Allard!?"

"Yes, Max," Allard said as he stared down at the native.

The crowd of natives were gathering thickly around. From the village itself young Jones was running at top speed, his two Papuan constables close at his heels. But Allard was not looking at anything but the fallen native who had attacked him. The man still held the axe in his right hand.

"You could have been killed," Max Halandann said. "I never saw a man handle an amok like that."

"Did you ever see an amok act like that," Allard said grimly.

"What?" Max Halandann said.

Allard bent down close to the fallen attacker. He looked at the man's crazed eyes. He smelled the man's breath. Then he looked at the arms of the fallen man. In the broken right arm there was a tiny puncture, a faint mark with a spot of blood still welling from it. Allard stood up. Young Jones was there now. Allard looked at Max Halandann and young Jones as the constables tried to revive the fallen attacker.

"Jones, did you ever know an amok to be knocked down, have his arm broken, and still get up and turn around and attack again?" Allard said. "This man has been drugged!"

"Drugged?" Jones said.

"Yes, some hallucinatory drug," Allard said. "He was probably a potential amok, and someone knew that, and drugged him to induce the state stronger and more permanently. Someone set this man to attack me."

There was no doubt in the mind of The Shadow that this attack had been no accident, no true amok. Someone had wanted Kent Allard dead.

"Come, Max, we've lost time," Allard said sharply now and strode off behind Max Halandann to the aircraft. There was no more trouble. The small plane took off without incident, circled the field once above the crowd of shouting natives, and then set a course steadily to the southeast toward Port Moresby. When they reached Port Moresby, Allard did not report to the authorities, but took time only to refuel before ordering Max Halandann to take off again for Cooktown and the return to Sydney. He was so preoccupied with the meaning of the planned attack on him, that he did not notice a short, swarthy man watching him. Nor did he notice

that the swarthy man ran for another chartered plane the instant Allard and Halandann took off.

11

WHAT WAS on Kent Allard's mind as the small plane returned over the blue water of the Coral Sea was a sudden realization—the forces he was battling were not simple London murderers, they were a far-flung and powerful organization!

There could be no other conclusion. Kent Allard was sure that he had not been followed from London or from Sydney. He was sure that he could not be connected to Lamont Cranston or to the London police. But someone in the back jungle of New Guinea had tried to have him killed. Someone who had been *there*, watching and waiting for anyone who came to learn what Paulson had found! An organization big enough, powerful enough, to have its power ready and waiting all across the world. An organization that had known that Paulson would be in London when no one else knew where Paulson was going. The question that remained was whether George Paulson had been part of the organization, or against it. The thousand pounds in the dead man's shoe, and the pistol at his side, made it seem very bad for the dead man.

By the time his plane reached Townsville, Kent Allard had still found no other possible explanation for the attack on him, and still could not escape the conclusion that George Paulson had been involved in some plot that concerned the mislabeled crates. But what kind of plot? It was highly doubtful that the same single company had sold both the aureomycin and the morphine, and sold by different companies there would not be enough profit to make the fraud worthwhile. It would be far too obvious for a single company to ship enough fraudulent material. They would have been discovered immediately. Allard was still puzzling over this when Halandann landed the small aircraft at Townsville. He would probably not have noticed the other small plane this time either, if Max Halandann had not sworn volubly as the other

plane came in for a landing almost on top of them on the small airport.

"Damned fool!" Max swore. "He's been right behind us all the way from Moresby! You'd think he'd have more sense than to ride so close."

Allard looked toward the other plane that taxied up not far from them. It was dark now, but there were lights on the field, and he saw the small, swarthy man get out of the other plane and walk rapidly away into the operations building of the airport. He stared after the swarthy man.

"From Port Moresby?" Allard said sharply.

"Sure, didn't you see them? They took off right after us. I don't recognize the plane or the pilot, and that's damned odd because I know every bush pilot down under."

"You're sure it was only from Moresby?" Allard demanded.

"Sure as rain," Max said. "No one followed us from the back country."

Allard nodded. He was thinking of the last words of Snatcher Martin—*the Eye-tie*. A dark, swarthy, Italian type who had asked questions and, probably, had killed Snatcher Martin. And he remembered the swarthy chauffeur who had fired at him in the slum street as he ran out of the alley where Paulson had died. He also remembered the small, swarthy man who had driven Jasper Lorrington's green Cadillac on the night Lamont Cranston had eluded Lorrington. Now here was a small, dark-skinned man who had apparently followed Allard from Port Moresby, across the Coral Sea, to Townsville far up in Queensland, Australia. And yet he was sure, certain, that he had not been followed either from London or Sydney.

"And you're sure they are following us?" Allard said.

"Well, no," Max said, "not sure of that. All I know is that they took off right after us from Moresby. Now they're here, and they were damned close to us most of the way across while you were dozing."

Allard smiled. "I wasn't dozing, Max, I was thinking."

Max laughed. "Looked like dozing to me."

"Well, perhaps I need some sleep then."

"You want me to check on those chaps?" Max said.

"You need some sleep, too," Allard said.

"Not at my age. You go ahead, I know you want to make an early start. I'll amble around and do some snooping, very discrete like, eh?"

"All right, Max," Kent Allard agreed. He was tired.

In his small hotel room he slept the deep, untroubled sleep

he always did. Anyone who happened to see him so deeply asleep could never have guessed that beneath this calm slumber was a mind ready to spring into full action at the faintest of noises, the minutest of changes in the air around him. Even asleep, the mind of The Shadow could sense the slightest hint of danger, of something infinitesimally unusual.

Over breakfast in the small dining room of the hotel, with a hot summer dawn just breaking outside with the cries of the strange Australian birds and the sound of the surf in the distance, Max reported what he had learned about the other aircraft and the swarthy man. Allard listened carefully.

"It's kind of peculiar," Max explained in a puzzled voice. "The ship is registered to a private Italian company, Perunia, S.A., a pharmaceutical outfit from Milan with a sales branch in Sydney. Pilot is an Italian, passenger is another Italian named Luigi Nenni, a company scientist."

"What's so peculiar about that?" Allard wanted to know.

"In the first place that's a special bush ship, and I know all the bush ships, but I don't know that one. If I didn't know better, I'd swear that was a ship I've seen over at Perth. Only how did they get it reregistered in Sydney?"

"And in the second place?" Allard prompted.

"In the second place the purpose of their trip to Moresby is listed as 'scientific exploration for drug sources.' But they stayed in Moresby only a day, and they never left the town."

Allard nodded. "A scientific exploration takes more than a day, and drug sources are not plentiful in Port Moresby."

"That's what I figured," Max said.

"Where are they now?"

"I don't know, they vanished. What do we do?"

"Is their aircraft still at the field?"

"It is."

"Then we take off and keep an eye on it. Perhaps they just got cold feet when they saw New Guinea," Allard said.

"It's happened to a lot of scientific expeditions," Max said as he finished his tea and stood up.

At the airport Max refueled the plane while Allard called Sydney to arrange for a jet to Paris. Paulson had stopped in Paris, and Allard wanted to retrace each step if he could. The first thing he saw when he left the Administration Building to walk to where Max waited beside his plane was the short, swarthy man. Nenni, if that were his name, seemed to melt away the moment Allard glanced toward the Italian plane where the pilot was now working alone over the engine. But Kent Allard had the sharp eyes of The Shadow, and he had

seen the swarthy little man. In that momentary glimpse he knew that Nenni was not the driver of Jasper Lorrington's green Cadillac. He had seen Lorrington's driver close up that night in the pub near The Belvedere. But he had not seen either the chauffeur who had shot at him near the alley behind The Blue Admiral, or the unknown killer of Snatcher Martin. Allard decided that the shy and lurking Nenni would bear close watching.

Without a glance toward the other aircraft, Allard strode on toward Max and his own plane. He did not want Nenni, if that were his name, to know he had been noticed, but on the other hand he did not want to escape the man. If Nenni were actually following him, he wanted to talk to Nenni as much as Nenni seemed to want to stay close to him. When he reached his own plane, Max started the motor the moment Allard was in his seat. Clearance was granted from the control tower, and Max taxied toward the far end of the runway. As Max revved up in preparation for his takeoff, Allard saw the other plane begin to taxi toward the same runway in readiness to be the next one off.

At Brisbane they landed again. Allard confirmed his reservation on the jet to Paris, and Max filled up the plane once more. Allard watched for the Italian aircraft, but it did not land at Brisbane. Perhaps the Italian craft were not following after all, or was clever enough to realize that they had been seen. Whatever the case, the Italians did not appear at Brisbane, and the last leg of the trip back to Sydney was without incident.

At Sydney, Allard had two hours to wait for his jet. He had a last drink at the international airport bar with Max, paid him, and promised to return soon for his planned expedition into the interior of New Guinea. Then it was time to bid his old friend goodbye and board his jet for Paris. On the jet he took his seat, fastened his seat belt, and sat back to look out the window for a last wave to Max. The veteran bush pilot was standing on the observation deck watching the big jet a little sadly. As he watched the old pilot, he saw a man dash quickly from behind a baggage cart and run toward the jet. The man moved swiftly, unseen by anyone but Allard who had The Shadow's quick eyes. It was the small, swarthy Italian. The man was the last passenger to arrive. The doors were closed at once, and the giant BOAC jet took off almost immediately after.

Kent Allard did not look around to find the swarthy man who called himself Luigi Nenni. It was still possible, if

faintly, that the man was not following him at all, that the whole thing was a coincidence. And if it were not a coincidence, he did not want Nenni to know that he had been observed. When the time came to confront Nenni, Allard wanted the surprise to be on the side of The Shadow.

At Istanbul they came down, but Allard did not leave the plane, and soon they took off again. Luigi Nenni had not left the plane either. Now the small Italian still sat far to the rear as the jet winged on.

Allard began to make his plans. Luigi Nenni had given no signs to confirm Allard's suspicions that the Italian was following him, except that he, too, had not left the jet at Istanbul. But this could also have been coincidence, and Allard needed better evidence than that. He prepared an innocent-seeming radiogram for one of his most trusted Paris agents, Marcel Guyot the taxi driver. The message would be delivered to Marcel's wife, who would contact him instantly by The Shadow's secret radio he carried in his taxi. The message told Marcel, in code, to be waiting to pick up Kent Allard at the airport.

As he waited to be checked through customs, Allard saw Marcel Guyot standing casually at the exit door. The taxi driver appeared to be warming himself against the cold wind outside, reading a newspaper, and generally minding his own business. Allard did not look at Marcel again. He tended to his business of checking through the customs, and observed the swarthy Italian, Nenni. The Italian had also left the plane and stood now only two places behind Allard. When he had been cleared, Allard walked quickly to the exit where Marcel Guyot had now vanished. The taxi driver would be waiting out in his taxi, ready to time his appearance in the taxi so that no one who might be watching could guess that the meeting had been prearranged. Allard walked rapidly out of the building as a test. He wanted to see if Nenni was, indeed, following him, and just how much influence Nenni might have. The Italian had been two places behind him in the same line. If it were possible for Nenni to follow him at once, then it would mean that Nenni had somehow arranged to be cleared specially. If Nenni did not follow him at once, but had to wait his proper turn in the line, then Allard would pretend to have forgotten something and would return inside to allow the Italian time to follow him, if that was what Nenni wanted to do.

Outside in the cold wind, Allard looked back. Nenni was still in the line. The Italian appeared in no hurry to rush

through customs. Allard waited until the Italian was about to be cleared, and then returned inside to buy a newspaper and some cigarettes. He stood at the kiosk and watched the swarthy man check through. Nenni did not even glance toward him, but walked straight out the exit and into a taxi. Allard watched the taxi drive off with the Italian. Could he have been wrong? It looked very much like Nenni had no desire to follow him at all. All coincidence? It seemed, somehow, impossible that he could have been followed all the way from Port Moresby by simple coincidence. And yet Nenni had driven off alone and without so much as a glance at Kent Allard. Puzzled, Allard left the kiosk and walked back out through the exit. A taxi pulled up as if in its regular turn. Allard got into the taxi. Marcel Guyot turned to grin at his chief.

"Ah, Monsieur Allard, we are on the important case, *oui*?"

"*Oui*," Allard said. "Did you see a small Italian man come out?"

"The little man two behind you in the line? Of course I saw him. He gave orders to be driven to the George V."

Allard thought for a moment. "Has anyone been watching my apartment?"

"No, no one. Absolutely no one," Marcel said.

"Take me to the apartment, then," Allard said.

He sat back in the dark interior of the taxi to think while Marcel drove into the city. Lost in thought, he did not notice the city outside. There were two possibilities: either Nenni was just what he was supposed to be and had no interest in Kent Allard at all, or the man was far more clever than he had seemed in his following. It was possible that Nenni knew exactly where Allard was going, and, therefore, had no need to follow Allard. But even if Nenni knew where Allard lived, how could the Italian be sure that Allard would go to his apartment this night? He was still considering these possibilities when he noticed the lights of the car behind him. The car was not a taxi. He leaned forward and instructed Marcel to take a circuitous route, and make a few attempts to shake the car behind if it were following them.

"Not good attempts, Marcel, just enough for us to be sure he is following. Don't actually lose him."

"*Oui*," Marcel said, and nodded.

The driver grinned. It was the kind of assignment Marcel enjoyed immensely. The Frenchman was proud of his skill and intelligence. To drive in such a way as to be sure a car was following him, and yet be sure also that he did not lose

the car by being too expert in his evasive tactics, required the fine skill Marcel considered that he had as a natural gift. It was a definite challenge to the volatile Frenchman, and he went to work with a wide grin. He drove on through the streets of Paris with one eye cocked on his rearview mirror. He led the strange car a merry chase that included plunging into the heavy nighttime traffic on the Champs Elysee. He drove with a reckless abandon and a squealing of brakes. The driver in the other car matched his abandon and remained glued behind them. At last, as he turned in the Boulevard St-Germain and headed for Kent Allard's apartment in St-Germain-des-Pres, Marcel turned to look at Allard.

"Monsieur Allard, I would say he was following us."

Allard nodded. He had his answer. Nenni, too, had radioed ahead. A confederate had been waiting to take up the pursuit, so that Nenni, in case he had been observed, could walk away as if completely devoid of any interest in Kent Allard. The Italian was smart and well-organized. Nenni had been sure that once he himself had proven that he was not following Allard, then Allard's suspicions would be lulled to the point where he would not notice a new follower. Allard now leaned forward to instruct Marcel.

"Drive straight up to my door as if we have noticed nothing, and when you have let me out drive straight on," Allard said.

"*Oui*," Marcel said.

"Then double back on foot and observe from across the street."

"I will stop him?" Marcel asked.

"No, let him come into the building, but in case he escapes me, do not let him come out," Allard said.

Marcel nodded, and turned off the Boulevard St.-Germain, made another turn a block away, and pulled to a stop before the small, inconspicuous apartment building where The Shadow kept his apartment on the top floor. Allard stepped out, pretended to pay Marcel, and the taxi driver drove off. Allard stood on the dark sidewalk and lighted a cigarette. He smoked and looked up at the dark Paris sky with its glow of reflected light from the city itself. He wanted to give the people in the car that had followed him time to see where he lived. The car did not enter the Rue St-Sulpice where his apartment was, but he was sure he saw it stop at the corner a block away. He turned and went into his building. The *concierge* greeted him warmly.

"It has been too long, Monsieur Allard," the jolly old lady said.

"It has, Madame DuLac," Allard agreed.

"You will stay with us for some time?"

"I'm afraid not this time. I will be going to London probably tomorrow morning," Allard said.

"Now we will have a *cognac* to welcome you home!" said Madame DuLac.

"Later, Madame, with pleasure. Now I am expecting to have a visitor. I don't know who he will be, but send him up alone."

"Ah, the mystery! It is like the old times!" Madame DuLac cried. "I will be as innocent as a boy in love!"

Allard laughed, and started up the stairs. When he reached the top he walked to the familiar door of his apartment. He took out the key Madame DuLac had given him, and started to open the door. Then he stopped. The sixth sense of The Shadow told him that the apartment was not, as it should have been, empty. Someone was waiting inside.

Allard turned silently and walked quickly along the hall. He opened the door of a linen closet and went in. He closed the door of the linen closet behind him. There, in the dark, Kent Allard disappeared and The Shadow now stood in the linen closet. For an instant The Shadow listened. Then The Shadow touched the wall of the linen closet. The wall opened silently. The Shadow vanished through the wall.

12

IN THE DARK apartment of Kent Allard, the man crouched close behind the door into the hallway neither saw nor heard the black figure come into the room. If the man had been looking toward the wall behind him where a tall mirror stood flush against the wall, it would have seemed to him that the strange black shape had come out of the wall itself. But the waiting man was not looking behind him. He was crouched low in a breathless silence, a small pistol held in his right hand, his ears alert for the sound of the key in the lock. A few moments before he had heard the footsteps come up the stairs, but they had passed on down the hall toward the other

apartment on the top floor, and the man had relaxed again to continue his vigil. He did not see or hear The Shadow emerge from the secret door behind the mirror, an entrance and exit devised by The Shadow for just this purpose.

"Do not move, do not turn, do not attempt to use that pistol!"

The man at the door did not move, nor did he give any sign of surprise or alarm. He remained crouched exactly where he was as the sound of the eerie voice filled the silent room.

"You will place the pistol on the floor," The Shadow ordered in his chilling voice.

The man placed the pistol on the floor.

"You will now stand up, place your hands behind your head, and turn slowly. Turn very slowly."

The man turned slowly, very slowly.

"Walk three steps toward the wall."

The man walked the three steps.

There was a movement in the room, and the pistol on the floor seemed to disappear into the heart of a giant black shadow that moved. The man with his hands behind his head now showed the smallest surprise. Two burning eyes turned toward him and the girasol ring glowed red in the dark with enough light to show a sharp, hawk nose beneath the slouch hat of The Shadow. The girasol also gave enough light of its own to reveal the waiting man to be the swarthy Italian, Luigi Nenni. The small man stared at the great, batlike figure.

"The Shadow!" Nenni said softly, a certain amazement and disbelief in his voice.

"You know me?" the hard voice of The Shadow demanded.

"Yes, I have heard of you," the man said. "I never expected that I would see you."

"If you know me, you know I fight all evil!" the chill voice of The Shadow warned. "Why were you following Kent Allard?"

"Allard seems involved in a case I am working on," the man said. "Who is he? A friend of yours?"

"Yes," The Shadow said. "You said you are working on a case? Who are you?"

"My name is Luigi Nenni, I am an agent of Interpol," the small Italian said.

"And the case you are working on?"

"An international ring of thieves, hijackers."

"Do you have proof?" The Shadow demanded.

"May I put my hands down?"

"Put them down," The Shadow said.

The small Italian lowered his hands and reached into his inside coat pocket. The burning eyes of The Shadow watched his every move. Nenni brought out a small wallet and held it out toward the black-shrouded Avenger. The long hand of The Shadow seemed to materialize in mid-air to take the wallet. There was a long silence in the dark room of the apartment. Then The Shadow's hand reappeared and returned the wallet to Luigi Nenni. The Italian put the wallet back into his coat pocket.

"You may put down your hands," The Shadow said. "Your credentials are authentic."

"Thank you," Luigi Nenni said.

"Sit down," The Shadow said from the darkness.

Nenni sat down. The Interpol agent took out a thin cigar and lighted it. Then he looked up at the black figure that towered above him, and the two burning eyes that were fixed upon him in the dark room.

"You were in New Guinea because of those mislabeled crates?" The Shadow said.

"In a way," the Interpol man said. "When Paulson was killed I knew he must have found something. So I went to New Guinea to try to retrace his steps. Instead I found that a man named Kent Allard had been asking questions about Paulson in Port Moresby. That young Peace Corps man, Jones, had already reported Paulson's interest in the mislabeled crate.

"I did not think I would find much in the back country, so I waited for Allard to return to Port Moresby. When he did I followed him. I tried to throw him off, but I think he knew I was following him. I did not mind too much, I did not object to alarming him into making some mistake. Apparently, though, he was not fooled and contacted you. Also, apparently, I was wrong about his connection to the case. He works for you?"

"He does," The Shadow said. "We are all on the same side. I am bringing the killers of George Paulson to justice."

"So am I," Nenni said.

"Just how does George Paulson fit into the case?"

"You don't know?"

"I do not," The Shadow said.

"George Paulson was a CIA man," Nenni said. "We were on the same case. The Peace Corps was only a cover for his

real work with the United States Central Intelligence Agency."

In the silence The Shadow's eyes glowed with an inner power. It explained much. It explained why Paulson was armed, and why he had not told his Peace Corps superiors what he was doing or where he was going. It explained why no one knew what he had been doing in London—the CIA would never want it known that its men worked undercover in the Peace Corps. They could not tell anyone who or what Paulson had been, or why he had gone to London, without revealing their operations. It explained why he had been wearing clothes without labels. And it fitted with Paulson's training as a policeman.

"He was investigating the mislabeled crates, so pretended to be a Peace Corps worker?" The Shadow said.

"Yes," Nenni said. "We started our work on the case about six months ago. But we know the ring had been working far longer than that. It is a clever operation, it was very hard to pin down at first. Just a matter of a few mislabeled crates, you see? Such crates have been part of all types of aid shipments for years. At first no one thought anything in particular of it. Someone had made an error or two, no more than that. That was what everyone who had found such mislabeled crates assumed. It all seemed like nothing more than a few innocent mistakes.

"Then Interpol became suspicious. A few crates turned up that were not simply mislabeled, but the drugs in them had been adulterated. Do you have any idea what an adulterated drug can do to people when the doctors do not know it has been tampered with? In one case half a village in the Sudan died horribly! The drug sent to help them had been reduced in strength by 60 percent, it became ineffective, it let them die terribly!

"After that, Interpol became interested. We went back and studied the cases of mislabeling. We added up all the mislabeled crates from all over the world. The figure in dollars was staggering. Millions of American dollars, perhaps billions. At first we thought that some industrial companies were in a plot to defraud. But then we looked more closely and found that there was no pattern to just *what* crates were mislabeled, except that they were all drugs, high-priced and small volume.

"Every conceivable type of drug was involved: antibiotics, morphine, insulin, barbiturates, adrenalin, vaccines, antitoxins, everything of high value. Slowly it dawned on us that

what we were dealing with was not fraud but a gigantic international ring of hijackers—men who took valuable crates from shipments and replaced them with worthless crates bearing identical labels. Only a few crates from any single shipment, so that no one could know until the crates were opened at their final destination. But the overall total of crates stolen and replaced added up to fantastic profits for someone.”

In the darkness The Shadow imagined the size of such an operation, the terrible consequences when the false crates were opened. Consequences for those who needed the real drugs. Consequences for the government who had shipped the drugs as aid, the damage done when the crates turned out to contain only worthless substitutes.

“Such an organization must be large,” The Shadow said, “and they must sell their stolen drugs.”

“Of course,” Nenni said, “but there is still a black market, and they could afford to sell cheaper than anyone. There are always those who will buy and not ask questions. In China, in other poor countries, in countries behind the Iron Curtain, there is a vast need for such drugs. We have not yet been able to prove any such sales, and we think that the criminals have large storage space somewhere to keep the drugs for a safer time.

“As for their operation, it is large but it is also clever and small. When we realized what we were fighting, and sought the cooperation of many governments, we were sure they could not long escape our scrutiny. But we were wrong. You see, while the whole scheme is enormous, each single theft is very small! A single crate in Bombay, another in Jakarta, still another in New York, or Sydney, or London!

“We decided that the way to combat the hijacking, and to discover who was behind it, was to place agents at every point where the crates were packed, shipped, transhipped, and opened. We could not cover all, though, we simply don’t have enough men. Then we found the problems. Each small theft is almost impossible to stop or to discover—we would have to check *every* crate of *every* shipment at *every* point in its journey from factory to final destination!

“Anything else is pure chance, luck, and we have had a few lucky captures. Then we found out how really clever this organization is. Each time we stopped a theft, and caught the hijackers involved, they turned out to be unimportant local criminals who had no idea who they were working for or what they were really doing. All they knew is that they were paid to steal one crate and replace it with a crate supplied to

them anonymously! They never saw the people who hired them or gave them their instructions."

"But they must have delivered the stolen crates!" The Shadow said.

Nenni nodded. "In each case where we caught the local thieves the destination of the crates turned out to be some deserted spot where they had picked up the false crate. There was never anyone there. Once we managed to set a trap, and all we caught was a local truck driver with an order to pick up a certain crate or crates and deliver them to another deserted warehouse."

"Local small fry, and small shipments," The Shadow said. "But somewhere they must have a central warehouse in each area."

"No, I don't think so. I think they must operate ships, perhaps a few tramp steamers. With the value of each crate of drugs, a ship could afford to go from port to port and pick up only a few crates at each port before returning to its home base. And we have no authority to search every tramp steamer on the sea!"

In the dark room The Shadow pictured the entire operation. At the center there had to be an organization with money, men, warehouses, ships, air transports, trucks. But at the low level only a few small-time criminals and local truckers. Each single theft hardly more than the everyday pilferage that occurred on every waterfront in the world. Such small pilferage that it was almost an accepted expense to the shipping companies! A warehouse full of crates, a ship loaded with crates, and some local thieves stole a single crate, perhaps two crates. Petty larceny—but when done all over the world the profit enormous. Each stolen crate containing a small drug that was worth a fortune. Nenni was correct—a single tramp steamer could take a year steaming from port to port picking up a few crates at a time of such valuable merchandise, and the full load would be worth a nation's ransom!

"Even if we could cover every location, I don't think we could stop them," Nenni said. "All we could do was cover every spot we could and hope for some mistake that would lead us to those at the top, to wherever the operation has its center."

"And you think that Paulson may have discovered such a mistake, some clue to the higher organization?" The Shadow said, his eyes burning like two fiery points in the dark of the Paris apartment.

"Or to where it operates," Nenni said.

"And he was killed for what he knew, or had?" The Shadow said.

"It has to be," Nenni agreed.

"But Paulson did not report what he had found?" The Shadow's chilling voice demanded.

"No," Nenni said, "but that does not surprise me too much. We were widely scattered. He had been out there six months, and he was completely undercover. He had no superior to report to anywhere outside Washington or Interpol headquarters."

"Do you think that his clue led him to London?" The Shadow said.

"Yes, that is exactly what I do think," Nenni said. "I think George went off on his own. I don't know, perhaps he had to check out the clue to be sure of what he had before he reported. Or perhaps we'd been looking for a break for so long he just lost his head. But I think he went to London because he had a real lead to the higher people in the hijack organization, and they killed him."

"How would they know he was in London?" The Shadow said slowly, his chilling voice hard and deliberate. "He was killed within an hour or so after his arrival."

"I don't know, but they seem to have people everywhere," Nenni said, "and if they knew what he had found, they could well know that it would take him to London."

The Shadow thought of the pseudo-amok native who had tried to kill Kent Allard there in the jungle valley of New Guinea. The organization did indeed seem to have people everywhere. And it began to look as if London were the headquarters of the hijack operation. It was more important than ever to find out just who had been on that jet from Paris with Paulson, and what Paulson had done, if anything, at the London airport before going to The Blue Admiral and his death.

"The clue must have led him to London," Nenni said, "unless he . . ."

"Unless he was involved in the organization himself!" The Shadow concluded in his hard, merciless voice. "Has it occurred to you that an organization such as you describe must have had one more attribute?"

Nenni had crushed out the long, thin cigar in his small finger in the ashtray on the nearest table. The Interpol man looked down at the floor of the dark room where the only light came from the glow in the Paris sky through the window,

and the red fire of The Shadow's rare fire-opal girasol ring. Then Nenni looked up at The Shadow's eyes again.

"Information about the shipments," Nenni said. "Yes, they needed that. Probably from more than one person employed by various governments. Do you think I haven't thought of that?"

"Have you?" The Shadow said.

"Many times. More since George was killed. He should have reported to Washington or Interpol. I've thought that perhaps he intended to report in London and simply didn't have the chance. It was just a mistake, that's what I want to believe, but . . ."

"But he could have gone to London to *sell* what he had found in that crate," The Shadow said implacably.

"Yes."

"Or he could have been involved even before he found the clue, and gone to London to meet his employers and warn them about the evidence he had found," The Shadow went on.

"Yes."

"He could even have been a leader of the criminals," The Shadow said relentlessly.

"Yes, that too."

"Do you think he was any of those things?"

"No," Nenni said.

"But you are not sure," The Shadow hammered.

"No," Nenni said in a low voice.

The Shadow studied the small Interpol agent. It was obvious that Nenni had not been told of the thousand pounds found in Paulson's shoe. But The Shadow knew of that mysterious money, and that George Paulson had almost certainly gone to The Blue Admiral, or at least to the East End, to meet someone. Paulson had gone straight to The Blue Admiral. He had made no report, contacted no one, as a CIA man should have if he had vital information. The Shadow wondered now just what Paulson had found, and where he had hidden it. Whatever it was, it appeared that neither Interpol, the CIA, the police, or the killers had as yet found it anywhere in his papers, luggage or clothing.

"What are you going to do next?" Luigi Nenni suddenly asked.

"I shall return to London," The Shadow said. "There is still much to be done before these killers can be caught."

"What about this Kent Allard? Are you sure of him?"

The Shadow's laugh was mocking in the dark room. Luigi

Nenni shivered as the chill laugh reverberated through the darkness.

"Do not worry about Kent Allard," The Shadow said. "He will return to London, and then his task is done. Do not try to follow him again, Nenni."

"But I will go to London," Nenni insisted. "The answer has to be there."

"Yes, the answer is in London," The Shadow said. "But do not yet go to the police. Contact a man named Lamont Cranston, or a woman named Margo Lane. They are both agents of mine. They will work with you if they can."

"Yes," Luigi Nenni said.

"Now go!" The Shadow commanded.

He returned the pistol to the small, swarthy Interpol man, and waited there in the dark until Nenni's footsteps faded down the stairs outside the apartment. Then The Shadow quickly removed his cloak and hat, returned them and the fire-opal girasol to their secret places inside his clothes, and Kent Allard stood again in the room. Allard switched on the lights and called Madame DuLac to arrange a seat on the morning flight to London. Then he went to bed. He lay alone in the dark for a long time, smoking and thinking. He was thinking of where George Paulson had hidden the clue he had found.

13

THE NEXT MORNING, at London airport, the famous explorer Kent Allard strode from the BEA jet and walked into the lobby of the main building. When he was sure that no one was watching him, the reporters who had been there to interview him having left with their stories of his next expedition to New Guinea, he walked casually into the men's room of the airport building. Once in the toilet, Allard entered a booth and locked the door behind him. He opened his small, black attache case and went to work on his face.

Some ten minutes later wealthy socialite Lamont Cranston entered the lobby of the building. He went to the public address announcer. A few seconds later the public address

system boomed out a call for Stanley to meet Lamont Cranston at the information booth. Cranston thanked the announcer and walked to the stand that sold cigarettes and newspapers. Casually, he wandered around the lobby in front of the information booth. Then, when he too was sure he was unobserved, he walked into the men's room. In the toilet Cranston entered a booth and locked the door.

Some few minutes after that, Lamont Cranston came out of the men's room and returned to his pacing before the information booth. He did not have long to wait this time. A man wearing the uniform of a chauffeur seemed to appear from nowhere and walk up to Cranston. Cranston and his chauffeur then turned and left the building together. They walked to a large Rolls Royce and got in. Margo Lane sat waiting in the back seat.

"A good job, Stanley," Lamont Cranston said. "You can take my attache case and return Allard's clothes to the secret room."

"Yes, chief," Stanley said. "I'm glad it's over, though. I just don't feel right playing you."

"Let us hope no one noticed the ruse," Cranston said.

"No one did, Lamont," Margo said. "Commissioner Weston is back in New York as you arranged, and the police were glad to see little of you. Jasper Lorrington called a few times, but he didn't come to see you. Jeff Byrd came to talk, but I'm sure he never guessed."

"Good, Margo. What about the two women?"

"You had to go and see Mrs. Paulson, she insisted," Margo said, "and I didn't want to arouse any suspicions. She noticed nothing. I'm not quite as sure about the Allyn girl, she seemed strange and very nervous, but I don't think she guessed anything about Stanley being disguised as you."

"We'll watch her," Cranston said.

"Was the trip successful?" Margo asked.

"Very much so, I think," Cranston said.

He told his beautiful secretary what had happened on the trip. She paled when he mentioned the attack of the amok native, but Cranston assured her that he was fine and uninjured. She became subdued and almost shocked as she listened to what Nenni had told him about the evil international hijack ring that now seemed to be behind it all. Her shock soon turned to a deep anger.

"The suffering they must have caused by stealing all that medicine!" Margo cried.

"Yes, Margo, and now I think they have killed two men."

"And to think that traitors must work with them," Margo said. "Traitors to all humanity, Lamont!"

"Yes, Margo," Cranston said. "There are always those who will do anything for money. Has Burbank reported further on Byrd and the Allyn girl?"

Margo nodded. "There is nothing at all on Jeff Byrd beyond what we know. He has worked for the State Department since leaving college, he has been here in London for three years, before that he was in Ghana and Washington. As for his trip to the East End that day, it seems legitimate. He was ordered to contact Waldo Mathias for the boy's mother. Bombardier reports that Mathias confirms the visit, but Byrd was in the area longer than he had to be."

Cranston rubbed his chin. "He could have been browsing around. He was at a book store stall when I saw him. What about the Allyn girl?"

"That is another matter, Lamont," Margo said. "Burbank reports that she did not reach the Catskills until some six hours after she claimed she did, and she was not at home on the day Paulson died."

"Where was she?"

"Here in London, Lamont!" Margo said.

"Are you sure?" Cranston said.

"Yes, we have witnesses to the trip over, and her name on a passenger list. She used a false name on her trip back, but we have a description. She went immediately from Idlewild to the Catskills."

"Very well," Cranston said. "Anything else?"

"Yes. Inspector Monk has found a man who was on the jet with Paulson and remembers him. The Inspector called only a few hours ago, he said it was important."

Cranston leaned forward in his seat. "Stanley, straight to Scotland Yard."

The man was another small, swarthy man. His round, dark face sweated in the stifling closeness of Inspector Monk's small office. Superintendent Jones filled the office with thick pipe smoke as he stood at the single window that Monk always kept closed against the winter drafts. Monk himself towered over the sweating man in the straight chair. Cranston and Margo stood in the far corner away from the closed window.

"All right, Mr. Grimaldi, just tell your story once more," Inspector Monk said to the small man.

The man, Mr. Grimaldi, nodded. "I'm a chef, like I

said already, right? I go to Paris two or three times a year to see my brother. He's a chef, too, right?"

"Get to the part where you're on the jet, if you please, Mr. Grimaldi," Superintendent Jones said from where he stood at the window.

"Right," Mr. Grimaldi said. It was obvious that the swarthy little chef was enjoying his brief notoriety. "Well, I got on the plane, and I see this bloke with the real deep tan, right? I mean, this fellow is darker than me he's so tanned. Then I see the ring he got on his finger. Now, I was a sailor in my young days, and it so happens I been out to New Guinea a lot in the old days when they still had plenty of headhunters right on the coast."

"You recognized the ring as a New Guinea ring?" Cranston asked. He had been studying the small man ever since he had walked into the office. The man seemed to be just what he said he was, an ordinary, uncomplicated chef. And yet, Cranston remembered Nenni's words—all small-time local criminals hired by the hijack organization.

"I recognized the tribe—that was a Digoel ring. Once I was up the Digoel River and got mixed up in a fight between the Digoel and tribes from over on the Merauke River. I tell you . . ."

"Stick to the point, Grimaldi," Inspector Monk snapped.

"Right you are, Inspector," Grimaldi said pleasantly. "Well, I got interested in the ring, so I struck up a conversation with this Paulson fellow, and . . ."

"You knew his name?" Cranston said. "He told you his name?"

"No, he didn't mention that, I noticed because I told him my name. The Inspector there told me his name was Paulson," Grimaldi said.

"Go on," Cranston said.

"We got to talking, right?" Grimaldi said. "He told me all about working for the Peace Corps. He was a nice young guy, he seemed real excited. I mean, he had this book in his hands but he never read it, you know? He talked a lot, and he looked out the window, and he kept looking at his watch."

"Did anyone else talk to him?" Cranston asked. "Did you notice anyone watching him?"

Grimaldi thought for a moment, and then slowly shook his head.

"No, no one but me. I kept him pretty busy talking," Grimaldi said.

"Get to the airport, Grimaldi," Monk snapped.

"I'm getting there, Inspector," Grimaldi said. "Like I said, he was excited so I was sort of interested. He . . ."

"When you say *excited*," Cranston said, "do you mean *nervous*, or *keyed-up*, or *enthusiastic*, or just what?"

"Well, I'd say sort of *keyed-up*, maybe a little nervous," Grimaldi said. "Anyway, I was sort of interested so I noticed him checking through customs. He was just ahead of me. I'm pretty sure he looked sort of nervous when they checked his suitcase, but nothing happened. So then I saw him go out from customs check and straight to a telephone booth. He went right to the telephone. I was still checking through, so I had time to watch him."

"How long was he on the telephone?" Monk prompted.

"Maybe ten, twelve minutes," Grimaldi said. "They gave me a little trouble in customs, right? I mean, so I had some extra stuff in my bag."

"How many calls did he make?" Monk persisted.

"It looked like just one. I mean, I only saw him dial once, he seemed to do most of the talking. Only that booth isn't too close to where I was, right?"

"Then what happened?" Monk said.

"Nothing. He just left the booth, picked up his bag, and walked out to get a taxi."

Monk nodded, and Superintendent Jones walked from the window to the swarthy little man. Grimaldi beamed where he sat. Jones took his pipe from his mouth and extended his other hand toward Grimaldi. The little man stood up.

"Well, thank you for helping us, Mr. Grimaldi. If we need you again, we'll call on you. You've been very helpful."

"My duty, right?" Grimaldi said.

"You're a good citizen, Mr. Grimaldi," Jones said.

"You'll let me know if you catch the bloke who did it, right? He was a nice young fellow," Grimaldi said.

"We'll inform you when we do, and thank you again," Jones said.

After Grimaldi had left, Cranston looked quizzically at the two Scotland Yard men. Jones was staring out the window again, his pipe sending clouds of smoke into the stifling air of the small office. Inspector Monk merely shook his head at Cranston.

"He's clean as driven snow, Cranston," Monk said. "I checked him up, down and sideways, as you Yanks say. He makes that Paris trip a few times every year. He's a chef, he's been open and above board all his life. No record, no hint of anything wrong. He was just someone on that jet."

"But we know now that Paulson did contact *someone*," Cranston said.

"And Paulson did the talking, as if he were explaining something," Margo said.

Cranston knew what Margo meant. It was as if Paulson were explaining what he had found to the unknown person on the other end of the telephone. But, he could not, of course, tell Monk or Jones what he knew, that would have revealed his identity as Kent Allard since Lamont Cranston had, supposedly, never left London. It could even risk exposing his real identity as The Shadow. For the moment he could not tell the police what he knew. He would have to wait for the authorities to decide to inform the English police. In the meantime, The Shadow would have to work alone as usual.

"What else have you found out?" Cranston asked.

"We located the taxi driver who drove Paulson from the airport to The Blue Admiral," Monk said. "He's clean, too, he saw nothing unusual. He drove Paulson straight to the pub."

Cranston nodded. The discrepancy in time, the extra half an hour, had been explained by Paulson's telephone call. There was now only less than fifteen minutes' error, and that had almost certainly been the traffic that night. Cranston made his next remark very casual.

"Grimaldi said something about a suitcase. I don't recall that a suitcase was found."

"It wasn't," Monk said.

Superintendent Jones turned from the window and looked at Cranston. Jones was puffing speculatively on his pipe.

"Cranston, I recall you once asking about Snatcher Martin," Jones said. "You didn't happen to say why. How did you hear of Snatcher, and in what connection?"

"Snatcher Martin?" Cranston said innocently. "Why, I think the barman at The Blue Admiral mentioned that someone of that name had been in the pub that night."

"I see," Jones said. "You went to The Blue Admiral?"

"Of course," Cranston said.

"But you didn't ever talk to Snatcher Martin?"

"No, I learned nothing important."

"You're quite sure?" Jones said.

"Of course, Superintendent," Cranston said. "Why?"

"We found Snatcher Martin's body a few days ago in a cellar at the other end of that area, Cranston. He had been poisoned. Now Snatcher was sure to end violently, but poison

is not exactly the way one would have expected Snatcher to go," Jones said.

"Have you found he had some connection to Paulson?" Cranston asked.

"No, not yet," Jones said, "but it occurs to us that a man like Snatcher would be quite capable of stealing the rings from a dead man's hand, after someone else had taken the papers and suitcase. Someone who was, possibly, looking for something particular that Paulson may have had."

Cranston's impassive face revealed nothing to Monk or Jones, but he was thinking that the Scotland Yard men were no fools. With very little concrete to go on, they were shrewdly coming very close to what Cranston already knew.

"You mean that the telephone call looks like he was making an appointment," Cranston said.

"I should say it does," Jones said.

Monk began to pace the small office. The stocky Inspector did not seem pleased. He scowled as he paced.

"I still think we've got a mugging-robbery," Monk said. "He may have made some appointment, it could have been with anyone, but I say he never reached his appointment."

"Just to be sure, though," Jones said, "Monk checked all the telephone booths, and the entire route Paulson took in that taxi, to see if Paulson hid anything on his way, or made any stops. We found nothing hidden, and the taxi man swears he made no stops."

"Not even at a red light, perhaps?" Cranston asked.

"He stopped at red lights," Monk said, "we thought of that, too, Cranston. But the taxi driver insists that his windows were closed and never opened the whole trip. Paulson could hardly have passed anything, or thrown anything out."

Cranston was silent for a time. The Scotland Yard men were more than clever. They had obviously come to the conclusion that Paulson had, indeed, been carrying something important. At least, Jones had. Monk still seemed unconvinced.

"So if there were something," Cranston said, "he seems to still have had it when he went into The Blue Admiral."

"It would seem so," Jones said.

"And you think he called someone to deliver whatever he was carrying?" Cranston said.

"Possibly," Jones said. "Or possibly he called someone to blackmail them. Remember the thousand pounds, Cranston, and the pistol."

"And the close range of the shot," Cranston said.

"Precisely," Jones said. The superintendent was looking at Cranston with considerable speculation. "I am beginning to think, Cranston, that George Paulson may have been somewhat more than he seems, or that your government has told us. I am also beginning to think that you know a bit more about all this than you have mentioned."

"I assure you, Superintendent, that the government has told me no more than it has told you," Cranston said truthfully, if somewhat evasively. The evasion was not lost on Superintendent Jones.

"That is not exactly what I said, is it, Cranston?" Jones said. "I understand that Jeff Byrd happened to run into you down near The Blue Admiral wearing what amounted to a type of disguise."

"Merely my old warehouse clothes," Cranston said. "You've been talking to Byrd?"

Jones nodded. "Mr. Byrd seems to know a bit more than I would have thought, also. He has as much as hinted that Paulson could have been involved in some illegal activities."

All during this conversation between Jones and Cranston, Inspector Monk had been pacing the small room impatiently. Now the stocky Inspector burst out angrily.

"Damn it, that call could have been to any friend! You're both jumping to conclusions we have no facts to back up. There is no evidence that Paulson had anything of value. I say the call has nothing to do with his killing."

Cranston nodded as if he could agree with Monk. He had no intention of revealing to Monk how much more The Shadow knew, and Monk could be right about the telephone call.

"You may be right, Inspector," Cranston said. "As a matter of fact, I've just learned something that could explain the telephone call. It seems that Miss June Allyn was in London on the day of Paulson's death. I don't believe she ever mentioned that fact."

Monk stopped pacing. "No, she never did!"

"How do you happen to know that, Cranston?" Jones asked.

"They found out in New York and called me," Cranston said. This was, of course, the truth, but not as he was implying. He was implying that it was the New York police, perhaps Weston, who had found out this information. He was sure that that was what Jones and Monk would assume. They were not yet aware of the presence of The Shadow in the case.

"Well," Monk said. "What say we have a small talk with Miss Allyn before she leaves, eh Superintendent?"

"Leaves?" Cranston said sharply.

Jones nodded. "We released Paulson's body to the mother. They are taking it back to New York tomorrow on the *Queen Mary*."

"Maybe no one will be going back to New York," Monk said as he led them all out the door, his battered old hat on his head and his raincoat streaming out behind him.

14

IN THE BRIGHTLY lighted room of The Belvedere, the packed suitcases of the two women standing at the door, Inspector Monk, Cranston, and Margo looked at June Allyn. The beautiful blonde girl looked frightened. Mrs. Paulson was looking from the girl to Monk, and back to the girl again. The older woman seemed to not quite grasp what had happened. Jeff Byrd stood tall and silent over by the windows of the room.

"All right," June Allyn said. "I did lie. I flew over the day George was murdered. I flew back the same night and went up to the Catskills to try to cover up my trip. But I didn't do it for myself, it was for George!"

Mrs. Paulson blinked. "You were here, dear?"

"Just what do you mean it was for George?" Cranston said.

"Perhaps you'd better start with the whole story," Inspector Monk said.

June Allyn nodded. "You see, I knew George was doing something more than his Peace Corps work. I could . . ."

"You *knew*?" Cranston said sharply.

"Oh, I didn't actually *know*. George never said, but there were hints in his letters and when he came home. I suppose I really didn't quite believe it from the start, George had always liked police work so much. And then his letters came erratically, there were times he couldn't write. When he came home he always seemed alert as if he never knew when he would be called away again, that didn't seem right for just a Peace Corps man.

"Then I wondered about the way he had been moved

around. I don't think it's usual for a man to have three different posts in a year in the Peace Corps. Oh, he explained it quite logically each time. He said he was sort of a troubleshooter for the Peace Corps, and I suppose that was true. But I worried a lot, I had seen so little of him, he hadn't been home in almost six months. So when he called and told me to meet him in London, but not tell anyone, I flew over."

"He called you?" Cranston said.

"From Sydney the day before he was killed," June Allyn said.

"He told you to meet him, but not to tell anyone?" Monk said.

"Not even his mother," June Allyn said.

Inspector Monk looked at Cranston. It was easy to guess what the inspector was now thinking. Paulson had not wanted even his mother to know that he was going to be in London.

"How did he sound?" Cranston asked.

"Excited," June Allyn said. "He said he had been waiting a long time for something to break, and that now it had. He was almost jubilant. He said that maybe we could get married now. Poor George."

There were tears in the beautiful girl's eyes. Margo walked to her and put her arm around the girl's shoulder to comfort her. Mrs. Paulson seemed frozen where she sat, unable to quite yet understand all that was going on. Inspector Monk again looked at Cranston. Paulson had said that now they could get married. The thousand pounds in Paulson's shoe was beginning to seem more and more obvious.

"What else did he say," Inspector Monk asked.

"Nothing," June Allyn said. "Just that I should fly over, not tell anyone, and check into the Green Park Hotel. He said he would call me that night, but he never did. I waited and waited, but he never called. He couldn't could he, he was dead!"

Inspector Monk was watching the girl with cold eyes. Across the bright hotel room, Jeff Byrd seemed to be staring at her. The muscular embassy man had an almost incredulous look on his face. There seemed to be something very close to anger in Jeff Byrd's eyes. Inspector Monk spoke bluntly.

"You're sure he didn't call you?"

The beautiful girl shook her head where she sat with Margo's arm around her shoulders.

"Say, about six-forty-five that evening? From the airport?" Monk pursued.

"No, he never called!" June Allyn cried.

Cranston's voice was soft. "You're quite sure he said he would call that night? Not the next day?"

"I'm sure. He said his business shouldn't take any time at all," June Allyn said.

"I suggest he did call, and that you met him, and that you killed him!" Inspector Monk said harshly.

The beautiful girl blinked up at the stocky inspector.

"Killed? I . . . killed . . . him! Me!"

"Why not? All we have is your word that you knew nothing," Monk said. "You admit you were here. You admit he called you. He telephoned someone from the airport, and you were the only one we know of that he said he would call. You lied about your trip here. It seems to me that you two were in on some scheme, and you killed him, probably to get all the profit for yourself."

"No!" the girl cried.

"He was shot close up with a .25 caliber pistol, a woman's gun! Have you ever owned a .25 caliber pistol, Miss Allyn?" Monk went on sharply.

"No! I didn't kill him! I didn't!" the girl sobbed now.

"What was he carrying, Miss Allyn," Monk said. "We know he was carrying something. He called and told you to meet him in that alley, and you did. You killed him there for something he had. Now what was it! We'll find out, you know."

"He didn't call! I waited and waited and he didn't call!" the girl sobbed, close to hysteria now.

Cranston frowned at Monk and shook his head. Much more and the girl, guilty or innocent, would break down and they would learn no more from her. Cranston spoke soothingly to the sobbing girl.

"All right, June," Cranston said, "when he didn't call what did you do?"

"I didn't know what to do," June Allyn said. "I thought I should wait, but then I thought about the way he had said to tell no one. I mean, I'd come all this way, spent the money, not that that matters, my father left me a lot of money. I thought I should wait, but then I wondered if he might be in trouble because he had asked me over."

"So you just flew home?" Inspector Monk sneered.

"Yes, I did! I left a message, and I could fly right back! I mean, I'd started to think about the way I was sure George was doing something more important than just Peace Corps work, and that perhaps he had done wrong to tell me where he was and ask me to join him. Perhaps my being here

would get him into trouble. I decided to go home and wait. In case anyone asked I'd say I'd never gone to London."

"Why didn't you tell us that after we found Paulson?" Inspector Monk said.

The girl wiped her eyes and looked at Monk.

"Because I was scared then. I had been here," she said simply. "I'm not a fool, Inspector, I knew how it would look, especially when I went home under a false name and made up that lie about going to the Catskills earlier than I did. But I only did that to protect George in case his asking me over had gotten him into some kind of trouble."

It was then that Jeff Byrd spoke for the first time since Monk, Cranston and Margo had entered the hotel room. The embassy man's voice was hard and harsh.

"It may have gotten him killed!" Jeff Byrd said.

They all turned to look at Byrd where he stood near the windows of the bright room.

"He broke every rule when he called you!" Byrd went on. "Who knows who might have overheard that call? Or perhaps seen you arrive and guessed George would be close by somewhere? Now I know how the killer knew George was in London. He even told you he'd finally gotten a break, the fool!"

"So you know more about George than you've told us?" Cranston said.

Byrd nodded. "We thought it best to stay out of the case for a time, we hoped that the police might solve George's killing without our having to reveal ourselves. But we would have to have told you soon," Byrd said, and he looked at Inspector Monk. "I'm afraid I'm a Central Intelligence Agency man, Inspector, and so was George."

"I knew it," June Allyn whispered. "I knew it."

"You can prove it?" Cranston asked.

Jeff Byrd nodded. The tall, muscular man produced his credentials. Inspector Monk studied them carefully. Then Monk nodded, and looked at Byrd.

"They're correct, right enough," Monk said. "I trust our government knows of this? I mean, that a supposed minor embassy official is an intelligence agent?"

Byrd smiled. "They do, Inspector. I'm not undercover, I'm a contact man. We just don't go around broadcasting it."

Mrs. Paulson has sat bolt upright when Byrd had spoken. Now the older woman looked incredulous, hurt, confused.

"George was a . . . spy? Is that what you're saying, Jeff? All this time George was a spy, and I thought he was only in the Peace Corps? He never told me?"

"He couldn't, Mrs. Paulson," Jeff Byrd said. "Those were his orders. George was very much undercover. Not many people knew."

"But you did," Cranston said.

"Yes," Byrd said, "I was his contact man here in London. He should have called me the moment he landed, but he didn't call me! That's why we felt we had to stay out of this. You see, we had no notice of his trip to London. He did not report anything to us."

"But he called someone," Monk said slowly.

"Yes, so I heard you say," Byrd said. "He called someone."

"Not you or any CIA people?" Monk said.

"None of us," Byrd said.

"So you think he might be involved . . ." Monk began.

June Allyn was on her feet. Anger flashed from the eyes of the beautiful blonde. Jeff Byrd looked toward her.

"Perhaps we had better continue in private, Inspector," Byrd said. "I don't want to hurt the women, and . . ."

"No," June Allyn cried, her face red with fury. "You're going to accuse George. You're going to malign him! I want to hear it. I think Mrs. Paulson and I have a right to hear what you think you have to say! You were his friend, you got him into all this!"

"No, June," Byrd said quietly. "I didn't get George into anything. He came to us of his own accord. He wanted to work with us, he was a trained policeman, so we took him on. It was known that I had gone to high school with George, so we cooked up the story about my persuading him to join the Peace Corps. It worked very well. On his first two jobs George did some fine work. But on this job . . ."

As the tall CIA man talked, Cranston now understood why Burbank had been unable to find anything about Byrd in Paulson's records. The CIA would not have wanted Byrd and Paulson to be officially connected in any way beyond the initial story of Byrd having persuaded Paulson to join the Peace Corps. Cranston understood this now, as he listened to Byrd explaining the case Paulson had been on. The story was essentially the same story Nenni had told The Shadow. An international ring of hijackers, working all across the world, clever and ruthless, and so far unknown. Inspector Monk listened with his mouth half open.

"... so it appears that George found some important clue out there. But he didn't report it. He came to London on his own instead. He called June when he must have known that was breaking all rules. When he got here he did not call me,

his contact. But he called someone. What could we think? That was why we felt we must stay out of it until we knew just what George had been up to."

"You know about the thousand pounds?" Monk said.

"Yes, it was reported through Washington," Byrd said. "But we did not know about his call to June. Now it looks very much like he planned to run away with..."

June Allyn was almost shouting. "Don't you dare say he was going to run away with me!"

"You yourself said he told you that maybe now you could get married," Byrd pointed out.

"He meant that he would have time! What else could he have meant?" June Allyn cried. "Money? I have more money than we could ever spend!"

"I believe Miss Allyn," Cranston said slowly. "Which means that he probably did plan to call you and report. Only he was killed first. I think he may have wanted to be sure of the importance of what he had found."

"Then he was simply stupid," Byrd snapped. "He knew better than to attempt to operate on his own, or I thought he did. Besides, June said he told her *from Sydney* that he could meet her almost as soon as he arrived in London. That doesn't sound like he had much doubt about his evidence."

"What do you think happened then?" Monk said.

Byrd shrugged. "Who knows, Inspector. Blackmail, perhaps. We've had cases before of men working for us and then attempting to use what they found out for blackmail. Not often, but there are always rotten apples."

Cranston considered this. Nenni, too, had wondered about Paulson. The CIA agent had not operated as he should have. That was the crux. Nenni had said that the trip to London *was* conceivable since Paulson really had no one to report to out in New Guinea or Australia. But why had Paulson failed to report here in London? That was the crux of the whole thing, just as Byrd had said. Still, blackmail seemed unlikely to Cranston.

"A blackmail plot would mean that the thousand pounds had been *paid to* Paulson there in the alley," Cranston said. "There was no time for him to have been paid elsewhere. That would mean that he sat down and put the money into his shoes out there in the alley in front of the victim? Hardly. And if he had, the blackmail victim would surely have taken the money back after killing Paulson."

"What about someone blackmailing Paulson?" Monk suggested.

"Paulson tried to kill the blackmailer, but was killed instead?" Cranston theorized. "No, his gun was still on his hip under his clothes. Still, it is possible. He could have thought he would have time to draw the gun."

"Anyway," Jeff Byrd said. "If someone were blackmailing George, that would probably mean he was in with the gang of hijackers anyway. What else would they have on him? No, it looks very much like George went into that alley to give something to someone, and they killed him to be sure he didn't talk."

In the silence that greeted this last statement from Jeff Byrd, Mrs. Paulson suddenly began to cry. The mother of the murdered George Paulson sat with the tears streaming down her face. Very low, almost inaudible, she mumbled as if she were alone in some great empty room. "...no... no...no...no...no...no..." Her eyes had become glazed, they stared at something far across the enormous empty room that only she could see. Slowly at first, and then faster, she began to rock back and forth on the sofa where she sat as if she had an intense pain in her stomach. June Allyn ran to her. The beautiful blonde had hatred in her eyes as she looked at Jeff Byrd and Inspector Monk. Margo hurried to the side of the moaning woman.

"We better get her to bed, Lamont," Margo said. "The shock and strain have been too much for the poor woman."

June Allyn was almost hysterical herself. "Why don't you all just leave! Leave! Leave and let us take him home and bury him! What does it matter!"

Cranston shook the girl hard. "Get a hold on yourself! Listen to me, June. Whoever killed George has killed others and will kill many, many more if not stopped and soon! You heard what Jeff told you. Adulterated drugs, substituted drugs! Life stolen from sick people all over the world who trusted in the aid of our governments!"

"All right, all right!" the girl sobbed, "but what can I do?"

"Try to think if George said anything else," Cranston said.

"Nothing, I know he didn't. He just said to meet him in London and not tell anyone. He was excited. He said he had been waiting for something to break and now it had. He said maybe we could get married now. He said I should fly over and check into the Green Park Hotel. He said he would call me but he never did. He was so jubilant, he even made jokes."

"Jokes?" Cranston said quickly. "What jokes? You didn't mention jokes before."

"Oh, nothing at all. I just asked if he were all right, and he said he was as long as he stayed out of Turkish baths. I told him to be serious. He said he had to catch his plane. Before he hung up he told me again not to tell anyone where I was going or why."

"All right, June," Cranston said. "Now try to calm down. I'll call the hotel doctor to give Mrs. Paulson a sedative, and you too. Margo, you stay here until the doctor says they are all right. Monk, Byrd, shall we go?"

Inspector Monk bristled. "Now see here, Cranston, I..."

"I think Mr. Cranston is right," Jeff Byrd said. "We'll find out no more here right now. Perhaps they had better delay their sailing though."

"You can be sure of that," Monk said.

"I'll contact the funeral home, June. Where is George's body?" Cranston said.

"The Hardy Funeral Home, Mr. Cranston," the girl said.

"Fine, I'll tell them you won't be sailing," Cranston said. "I'll call you later, Margo, at the office."

"I'll be there, Lamont," Margo said quietly.

Cranston nodded and motioned to Monk and Byrd. The three men left after Cranston had called the hotel doctor. In the hall Inspector Monk swore angrily.

"Listen to me, Cranston," Monk said sharply, "I'm not at all sure I believe that Allyn girl. That's a mighty odd story she tells. Flying all the way over here, and then flying back without waiting or trying to find Paulson."

"Odd, but I think true, Inspector," Cranston said. "Miss Allyn is a rich girl, she has a reputation for flying around. She hadn't seen Paulson for six months so it's logical she would fly over. I have a strong hunch she had guessed just what Paulson was really doing, so she might very well have decided to just fly home to keep him out of trouble. On top of that her story checks."

"Checks? Damn it, Cranston, how does it check!?" Monk roared.

"She flew over here under her own name. She checked into the Green Park under her own name, if you investigate I'm sure you'll find that to be true. Then she flew home under a false name. If she had been mixed up in anything, she could have done a much better job of covering herself."

Byrd nodded. "I think Cranston's right. This isn't any one-man, or one-woman, killing."

"Well, perhaps you're both right," Monk said reluctantly, "but we'll watch her, *and* the mother."

"By all means," Cranston said.

"I'll leave you all now," Byrd said. "I have to report all this."

Cranston turned to the tall CIA man. "One thing more, Byrd. You said Paulson should have called you. Who else should he have called? Or might he have called?"

"Well, I'm not alone here, but I'm the only CIA man here who knew just what George was. I was his contact if he ever came to London. Of course, he wasn't supposed to come here."

By this time the elevator had come, and the three men rode down. In the lobby Monk excused himself to go and call in his report, and to arrange for constant surveillance of Mrs. Paulson and June Allyn. Cranston was left alone with Byrd. The two men walked toward the wide lobby entrance.

"No one else knew he was CIA but you?" Cranston said.

"Not on our staff here," Byrd said. "Of course, George was working closely with Interpol. He could have contacted them. He had his credentials, I suppose. We always carry them. He really could have called anyone at the embassy, or even the British police."

"Is it usual for a CIA man to contact the police?"

"No, but he might if he had some local information he needed to have help on. As a matter of fact I've wondered about that. George didn't know London well, and The Blue Admiral is rather out of the way. If what he had found led him down there, he might have needed police help."

Cranston thought about Monk arriving early on the scene the night of the murder. Monk had been on a case in the East End. The stocky inspector was still trying hard to convict almost anyone. Then there was Luigi Nenni of Interpol. Even Interpol agents were human, and there was much money in the hijacking operation. Cranston thanked Byrd, and the two men separated on the street. As soon as Byrd was out of sight, the Rolls Royce appeared on the street with Stanley at the wheel. Cranston got into the back seat.

"The Hardy Funeral Home, and hurry, Stanley," Cranston said.

The day had turned dark and grey, thin snow already beginning to fall. In the back seat of the Rolls Royce The Shadow now sat shrouded in black, his hawklike features anxious, his eyes burning in small, hard points of fire.

"Faster, Stanley!"

The big car surged forward.

15

THERE WAS a funeral in progress at The Hardy Funeral Home. At the door of the sepulchral hall that had once been the elegant entrance to a town house mansion of the time of the Regent, the obsequious attendants greeted the mourners in low, oily voices. The mourners filed into the long chapel hall, the black-clad women sniffing as much from the sudden cold snow as from grief, the men stolid and uncomfortable in collars that pinched their red necks.

On the floor below, where the low hum was only a faint and distant sound like a far off surf, a lone man worked over a corpse. The man, an embalmer, was intent upon his grisly work. He moved smoothly and efficiently as if he were working on nothing more than a wax dummy. At this point he had all but finished this job. Suddenly, the telephone on the wall rang. The man dried his hands and went to answer. He nodded at what he heard, hung up, returned to his work. In a few moments he had finished. He placed the prepared corpse back into its refrigerated drawer in the long cabinet of drawers. Then he took off his rubber apron, washed his hands, put on his overcoat and hat, and left the cellar room. His footsteps echoed back along the cellar room for a moment. Then the outside door slammed, and he was gone. The dim cellar room became silent.

A few seconds passed before a tall, black figure glided into the light from the hidden shadows of the room. For another few seconds The Shadow stood motionless and listening. The hum of mourning voices was steady and distant above his head. The Shadow moved down the long cabinet until he reached a drawer labeled simply: *Paulson, George*. The tall Avenger opened the drawer and looked down again at the body of the dead CIA man. Embalmed now, the figure lay on its back, its face peaceful and lightly rouged for its coming journey home. The tiny hole of death was only faintly visible now under a covering of wax. The Shadow stood above the corpse and studied it carefully.

His fierce eyes moved their scrutiny slowly up and down the whole body; the face, arms, torso, legs, feet, and back up to the face again. He bent down and his long fingers began to

touch the body of George Paulson. He explored every inch of the body. At last he reached the large, gaudy tattoo of the screaming eagle. The tattoo covered the large scar on Paulson's right forearm. The hair grew thick on the forearm except where the scar was. The Shadow touched the scar and the hair. Suddenly his eyes gleamed in the dim light. The hair was of two different textures! His long fingers felt the scar and tattoo, pressing against the dead flesh of the murdered man. Quickly he reached into the folds of his black cloak and brought out a small, sharp knife. He worked carefully with the knife around the edges of the tattoo. At last a small layer of skin pried away from the rest of the arm. Deftly, using the knife, The Shadow peeled off the entire tattoo, scar, and false hair. The screaming eagle and the scar came off with the false hair leaving a pale, shaved patch of skin without scar or tattoo.

In the center of the bare skin that had been hidden beneath the false tattoo and scar lay a small, rectangular piece of blue cardboard with printing on it. The piece of cardboard had jagged edges as if it had been torn. The Shadow studied the piece of cardboard in the dim light. He knew at once what it was—a ticket!

It was a ticket to some stadium. It read that it was for seat C-12 for a football match between *Glenlivcoe United* and the *Raith Rovers*. The place was Glenlivcoe Stadium. The time two months ago.

The burning eyes of The Shadow gleamed now with triumph. He had the clue, the evidence, that George Paulson had found in a mislabeled crate so many thousands of miles away in the jungles of New Guinea. No wonder George Paulson had been excited. The mislabeled substitute crates must have been packed and shipped from somewhere. There had to be a place to store the stolen drugs somewhere. And this ticket had been used in some small city named Glenlivcoe, almost certainly in Scotland. The Shadow's chilling laugh rose in triumph again. He turned to replace the drawer with the body in the cabinet. He stopped. His eyes darted toward the stairs that led down from above. Someone was coming very carefully down those stairs. Instantly, The Shadow returned the ticket to its bare spot on Paulson's arm. He deftly replaced the false tattoo and scar. Then he glided away and seemed to melt into the shadows.

Almost at once a tall man appeared at the foot of the stairs from above. He waited for a moment, listening as if he had heard The Shadow as he came down the stairs, and then he

stepped out into the light of the single overhead lamp above the embalming table. It was Jeff Byrd. The CIA man held an ugly .45 automatic.

The CIA man seemed alert. In the dark part of the cellar room The Shadow realized that Byrd had, indeed, heard him. The faint noise of the cabinet drawer with Paulson's body on it being pushed back into the cabinet had been heard by Byrd. Now the CIA man was very wary. The Shadow neither moved nor made the slightest sound. His breathing had slowed to almost nothing. He was all but invisible where he stood blending into the dark shadows of the cellar. Jeff Byrd looked around very carefully. The CIA man was cautious, but, at last, unable to see anything out of order, and with no more unusual sounds in the cellar, Byrd turned toward the long cabinet. He went down the row of drawers until he reached the drawer labeled *Paulson, George*. Byrd bent to open the drawer. The Shadow seemed to float from the darkness of the hidden part of the room. Byrd had a momentary glimpse of the giant black figure. Then The Shadow's hand descended sharply against his bent neck and Jeff Byrd collapsed on the floor. His automatic skittered across the floor.

Quickly, The Shadow lifted the fallen CIA man and carried him back into the light near the embalming table. Then he removed his black cloak and slouch hat, returned them and the fire-opal girasol to his hidden pockets, and stood in the cellar as Lamont Cranston. Moving with speed, Cranston retrieved Byrd's automatic and placed it beside the unconscious man. Then he walked to the stairs and stood in the shadows just up the stairs from where he could see Byrd. He waited. After a time, Byrd began to stir. The CIA man sat up and groggily shook his head. Byrd looked down at the pistol beside him, and then around at where he sat near the embalming table. He seemed confused to find himself where he was, and his eyes searched the cellar for something that appeared to puzzle him. Cranston made noise on the stairs as if he had just come down. Cranston stepped out into the light. He feigned surprise to see Byrd there sitting on the floor.

"Byrd, what the devil . . . !" Cranston cried.

Byrd shook his head. "I don't know, something hit me I think. Something big, black. I didn't really see."

"Are you all right?" Cranston asked.

"I think so," Byrd said. "I don't know. I'm sure I was over near the cabinet, not here."

"As long as you're all right," Cranston said.

Byrd blinked. "I'm not sure I really saw anything. I seem to have just blacked out."

"What are you doing down here anyway?" Cranston asked.

Jeff Byrd looked up at Cranston. The CIA man scrambled to his feet. He picked up his automatic and replaced it in his side holster. He raised an eyebrow toward Cranston.

"I might ask you the same thing, Cranston," Byrd said.

"And probably get the same answer," Cranston said drily. "It was that joke about the Turkish bath, correct?"

Byrd smiled. "You're smarter than I gave you credit for, Cranston. Yes, it was the joke. It made me begin to wonder if the killers had gotten what they were after or not."

"And if they hadn't," Cranston said, "then that joke could mean that Paulson had hidden whatever it was on his person."

"That's my idea," Byrd said.

Cranston, who knew both that the killer had not gotten what he had presumably killed for, and that the evidence was indeed hidden on Paulson's body itself, pretended that he had had the same idea, but that it was a wild idea at best. He could not tell Byrd what he knew, none of it, without danger of revealing his identity as both The Shadow and Kent Allard. He was fairly sure that Nenni had reported at least Kent Allard, and Byrd probably knew about the explorer. And if he showed that he knew just what and where the hidden evidence was, Byrd would know who had struck him here in the cellar. So he contented himself with agreeing with Byrd.

"Mine, too, although its a faint hope," Cranston lied.

"Let's see, shall we?" Byrd said.

Cranston nodded and led the way to the cabinet where Paulson's body rested. He made sure that he was the first to draw out and bend over the body. This was a wise precaution. The tattoo and false scar were loose. Cranston pretended to discover the false tattoo and to pry it off with his knife. He held the ticket in his hands once again. Byrd took it.

"A football ticket, soccer to we Americans," Byrd said. "At least George showed some brains in hiding it."

"Glenlivcoe," Cranston said. "It sounds like a Scottish town."

"It is," Byrd said. "Way up north, on the northwest coast."

"A small town?" Cranston said.

"I think very small," Byrd said. "It's obvious why George thought this was so important. Some workman packing the false crate must have inadvertently dropped the ticket into

the crate. It could pinpoint where the crate came from, the false crate."

"And presumably where the stolen crate went to," Cranston said.

Byrd nodded. "Possibly. On the other hand the ticket could have been dropped in at any time, anywhere. It could mean nothing at all."

"It meant enough to kill for," Cranston said.

"All right," Byrd said, "what do we do?"

"Inform the police?" Cranston asked.

"I suppose we should," Byrd said. "But I'm not sure I trust the police entirely in this case. George did call someone from the airport that night."

"Perhaps you're right," Cranston said, relieved to hear that Byrd would not insist on calling the police into it at this point. Cranston was not at all sure of Monk yet. This was a job not for the police, but for The Shadow.

"I'll drive up to this Glenlivcoe tomorrow," Cranston said.

"Not without me. George was my responsibility, Cranston."

"Very well, if you can get away from your cover duties."

"I'll see to it," Byrd said. "I think it's time we started working together on this anyway. These men are nothing to play games with."

"No," Cranston said. "I suggest we leave here now by separate routes and at separate intervals. I have a strong feeling that our hijackers will come to the same conclusion about where this ticket is hidden any time now."

"Perhaps they already have," Byrd said grimly. "Something knocked me out down here. You must have scared him off when you came down."

"Probably," Cranston agreed.

The two men left the cellar. Byrd went first by the stairs up into the main rooms of the funeral parlor. Cranston left next by the cellar exit into the street that the attendant had taken earlier in response to a carefully arranged call from Stanley at Cranston's orders. Once in the street again, the snow falling more thickly now, Cranston began to walk west on the quiet suburban street. Evening was approaching. Cranston walked for some time along the snowy streets, aware of the Rolls Royce moving along slowly behind him, but making no sign of recognition until he was convinced that no one had followed him, and that he was unobserved. Then, quickly, he slid into the rear seat of the Rolls Royce as they

both waited at a red traffic light. Inside he leaned forward toward Stanley.

"The office, Stanley," Cranston said.

The snow prevented any speed, and it was late evening by the time Stanley parked the Rolls Royce at the curb in front of the tall, grey hotel in Kensington. The Lancaster was a blaze of light now in the early evening. Cranston, looking up, noted that the lights were on in his own office also. With Stanley, he climbed the stairs to his floor. Inside his office the lights were all on, but the office was empty. Leaving Stanley in the office, Cranston went next door to his suite to find Margo. The beautiful woman was not in the suite. Returning to his office, he went through the wall into the secret room. Margo was not in the secret room either. Alarmed, Cranston called Burbank in New York through his special television intercom.

"Has Margo reported in the last two hours!" Cranston demanded, in his alarm not stopping to appear as The Shadow.

"No, sir. No word from her," Burbank responded.

Cranston switched off the system by removing the girasol-ring he had donned to make the contact with his far-off main headquarters. Thoroughly alarmed, the Avenger left the Secret room and returned to his private office, where Stanley was waiting. The alert Stanley held a piece of note paper. Cranston took it and read it. *Will report in one hour. Luigi Nenni contacted us as per your instructions to him in Paris. We have gone to Interpol to study reports of local captures of hijackers. Time now: 1810 hours.* Cranston smiled and looked at his watch.

"It's 1835 hours now," Stanley said.

"Margo is a good agent," Cranston said. "Those reports could yield information. Now, Stanley, tomorrow morning I want you to drive me up to Scotland. We'll get an early start. We'll leave Margo to cover and keep contact with Burbank."

"I'll get the car ready. Just us, chief?"

"No, Jeff Byrd, a CIA man, will be with us. You better go fully armed," Cranston said.

"More than my usual weapons?" Stanley asked.

"I think your shotgun might be wise in addition to the regular weapons in the Rolls," Cranston said.

Stanley left then, and Cranston took out his map of Scotland to study it. Glenlivcoe was a small town far up in Ross

as Jeff Byrd had said. It was on the sea, the body of water between the mainland and the Isle of Lewis called The Minch, and not far from the town of Ullapool on Loch Broom. It would be an all-day drive, but as Cranston studied his map he began to feel more and more excited. Glenlivcoe was a very small town. An operation the size of the international hijacking would not be easy to hide in such a wild, unpopulated area. Obviously the killers of George Paulson knew that, they had gone to great lengths to get the ticket. Cranston was still studying the map when Stanley returned.

"Back so soon," Cranston said.

"It's past six-thirty, chief," Stanley said. "Didn't Margo call in?"

Cranston looked at his watch. It was now 1940 hours. Cranston looked at the special radio receiver on his desk that was disguised as a simple intercom.

"She'll call, chief," Stanley said.

At 2030 hours Lamont Cranston stood up. The radio receiver on his desk, and the telephone, had been silent. Cranston stood in his private office and looked at Stanley.

"They've got her, Stanley," Cranston said.

"Maybe not, chief," Stanley said lamely. "Maybe she had an accident."

"No, Stanley. If it were humanly possible to call, she would call once she had said she would. They've got her."

"This Nenni, Chief?"

"Perhaps he fooled me over there in Paris, I don't know. If he did, he'll wish he hadn't!"

"Easy, chief," Stanley said.

Cranston began to pace the office. The hawklike face of the socialite was set as grim as death. They had Margo, whoever they were, and the only clue he had was a torn soccer ticket. It would have to be good enough.

"You will stay here, Stanley. Don't leave this room for one second in case she tries to get through to us."

"Yes, chief," Stanley said.

"Call Jeff Byrd and tell him we're going to Scotland tonight. I will pick him up in twenty minutes in the Austin-Healey. We will fly to Glasgow. After that arrange for a car, a fast car, to be ready for me at Glasgow airport."

"Yes, chief."

"Call the airline and get me on the next flight out. I don't care what you have to do, but get us on that flight!"

Without waiting for an answer, Cranston strode out the

door of his office. Behind his grim face there was one small fact that he was thankful for—he had not brought in the police. If he knew the men he was against, the sight of the police would be Margo's death sentence—if they had her, and he had little doubt that they had her. And if it were Nenni who was in with the gang, then he himself had betrayed her by telling Nenni to contact her or himself when he came to London. If Nenni had fooled him, he might have killed Margo himself!

16

IT WAS past midnight when the jet finally set down at Glasgow airport. The industrial city was asleep under a cold, driving rain. Cranston and Jeff Byrd went straight to the small but powerful Jaguar that was waiting for them. An hour later they were beyond the city driving straight north through the icy rain. The road wound curving north past Loch Lomond and Loch Tay, through the silent towns of Tarbet and Tyndrum. Risking the narrow road and the turns, Cranston drove as fast as he could through the rain. He drove in silence as Byrd analyzed the case. He always seemed to return to the same point—the guilt he felt for George Paulson.

Cranston peered ahead through the windshield of the Jaguar. He could see little in the driving rain, and barely saw Kinlochewe as they raced on through the town. He was still thinking of Margo and the consequences of his mistake with Nenni. He thought of the consequences if he were right and they had her in Glenlivcoe, and of the worse consequences if he were wrong. He shook his head. There was no time to think now of consequences of past mistakes. The problem now was to find out just what was so important about Glenlivcoe that two men had died in order that no one should connect the small town to a mislabeled crate in far off New Guinea. If the mere connection to the town were that important, and the organization was in any way aware that he might be on his way, then it stood to reason that they would

attempt to stop him! Cranston shook his head again, coming more awake as he peered ahead through the rain.

"Getting sleepy?" Byrd said.

"No, I'm fine."

"You were shaking your head," Byrd said.

"It's not easy to see in this rain. I think we better be alert."

"I haven't stopped being alert, Cranston," Byrd said. "It's my job. I know what they'll try to do if they find out we know about the ticket and are on our way."

Cranston nodded and kept his eyes on the road. It was the dawn of a grey, windswept day of rain as they passed through the small town of Ullapool. The next town was Glenlivcoe. It proved to be a small, dark grey almost black town with rows of houses of the attached type known the world over as *company houses*. These workmen's houses were old, built over a hundred years ago, probably more. It was a desolate, empty town, and Cranston drove carefully toward the center, his eyes more than alert.

Just as they had reached the town Byrd had touched Cranston on the shoulder. The CIA man had pointed off to the right. There was a small fairground to the right of the road at the southern edge of the town. Almost in the center of the fairground, sodden by the dawn rain, was a rickety covered grandstand. The grandstand was little more than a shed, it was that small. It stood beside an open field with the drooping nets of wet soccer goals at each end. Cranston nodded to Byrd.

"That must be it," Cranston said.

Byrd seemed puzzled for a moment. "This town is hardly big enough to have a professional team, Cranston. *Raith Rovers* are a first-class pro team."

"Of course," Cranston said. "It must have been an early cup match, *Glenlivcoe United* must have gone farther than usual. Which means that just about everyone in town was at the match."

"And probably kept their ticket stubs as a souvenir," Byrd said.

Cranston again nodded his agreement. But his mind was on something quite different. He was looking at the houses—*company houses*. Glenlivcoe was obviously a small industrial town. From all the look of it, Glenlivcoe was a *company* town. Cranston thought of the requirements of the hijack organization: a large place to store the loot; a place to make

the false crates; ships and a full distribution system; access to markets to sell the stolen drugs. An industrial company with dealings all over the world would be just right for the hijack operation. But all the way into the town from the south, past the soccer field and rows of ugly and identical attached houses, he saw nothing that looked large enough for a factory big enough to own the town.

By this time they had reached the center of the town, and people were beginning to stir. Some men worked on boats down near the quay. The garage had opened, and a tall mechanic stood and watched the Jaguar as it passed. On the main street, past the closed shops, two men and a woman walked bent into the rain. Farther down on the main street was the railroad station. Two men leaned against the outside wall of the station. They stood and smoked in the shelter of the roof overhang and watched the Jaguar. A large truck had started up in the parking yard of the railroad station. Cranston stopped the Jaguar in front of the two men leaning and smoking in the shelter of the station roof.

"We're looking for the office of the company," Cranston said to the men through the opened window on the Jaguar.

"The company?" one of the men said slowly, removing his pipe with a slow deliberate movement.

"There can't be two here," Cranston said with a smile.

"Aye, nae more than Lorrington's. Ye'll want Lorrington's," the man said.

The second man removed his pipe from his mouth. He looked at Cranston and Byrd and the powerful Jaguar.

"Ye've coom a wee distance," the second man said. "We get few outlanders here."

But Cranston was only half listening. *Lorrington!* The Lorrington Wool Company, Ltd.! Of course. A wool company had all the attributes needed to cover and handle the hijacking operation: large warehouses far away up here, probably scattered all over the Highlands and the Hebrides; reason to ship large crates all over the world; dealings with many, many countries including, and especially, the Soviet Union and Red China. Wool was just right, and Cranston swore softly at himself for not seeing it earlier. But Lorrington had actually thrown him off by his brazen visit. Still, perhaps it was not Lorrington himself. Cranston remembered the swarthy little chauffeur of Lorrington's. It was possible that Lorrington, down in London most of the time, was not aware of what was going on up here in Glenlivcoe. That would make the ticket even more dangerous to . . .

Jeff Byrd touched Cranston on the shoulder again. Cranston broke out of his reverie. He looked around.

The tall mechanic from the garage behind them was walking toward the Jaguar.

The two men and the woman who had been walking down the main street against the driving rain had turned now. They were all three walking toward the Jaguar.

The large truck in the railroad parking yard had pulled out of the yard and was blocking the narrow main street of the grey little town.

Down the road, behind them, another truck was parked across the main street.

The garage mechanic had his right hand in the pocket of his leather jacket. The two men and the woman had their hands in the pockets of their raincoats. The driver of the truck ahead had opened his door and a rifle rested in his lap out of sight of anyone but Byrd and Cranston.

Cranston reached for his own gun.

The first of the two pipe-smoking men at the station now leaned into the Jaguar through the open window on Cranston's side. A large, ugly British Army revolver was in the hand of the man. It was pointed straight at Byrd and Cranston.

"I'd nae try that, lad," the man said. "Ye'll better step out here. Quick now!"

Cranston looked around. So did Byrd. Then they both stepped out of the Jaguar. They had walked into a trap like two amateurs. As he got out, Cranston felt almost sick. How had the gang known they were coming?

"Walk slow, but steady," the man with the gun said softly.

The man indicated the direction. The others had gathered around by now. The garage mechanic stepped into the Jaguar and drove it off. The truck started up and vanished down the road. The two men and the woman followed behind Byrd and Cranston as they were herded down a small side street toward the water. The other man who had been leaning against the wall in the shelter of the station eaves remained where he was, smoking his pipe and watching.

Cranston and Byrd were marched down the side street until they reached another cross street. As they were turned into this new street, Cranston saw the green Cadillac ahead. It was parked in the shelter of a building out of sight of anyone in the village or on the water of the loch. The door of the Cadillac was open. The small, swarthy chauffeur stood beside the car, a silenced, long-barreled revolver in his hand.

As Cranston and Byrd were marched up, Jasper Lorrington greeted them pleasantly from the back seat through the open door.

"Ah, Cranston, a pleasure to see you again. Alas, my regrets that it must be under such adverse circumstances for us all, eh?"

Lorrington grinned. The fat man was seated comfortably in the back of the Cadillac, his thick legs wrapped in a warm car blanket against the raw day. Cranston's sharp eyes saw a faint line of black where the green paint ended at the edge of the opened door. There was no doubt now. The green Cadillac, and the black Cadillac of the alley behind The Blue Admiral, were one and the same.

"What have you done with Margo!" Cranston snapped.

"Ah, I deeply regret that, but we could hardly overlook her after Nenni led us to her. A mistake, that, I'm afraid, Cranston."

"If you've hurt her, I'll..." Cranston began.

Jasper Lorrington's small eyes glinted and became hard for the first time. The fat man waved a pudgy hand sharply like a sword slashing at the air.

"You'll do nothing, Cranston!" Lorrington snarled, and then he smiled, his urbane manner returning as suddenly as it had gone. "I fear your position is not precisely strong for bargaining. Since I am quite sure that only yourself, and your CIA friend Mr. Byrd there, know about that ticket, I fear help will not be forthcoming, eh?"

"Don't be too sure, fat man," Jeff Byrd said. "I reported it to my people, you can bet on that!"

Jasper Lorrington looked at Byrd for a long few seconds. Then the fat man hissed, a sharp snakelike hiss. The swarthy chauffeur stepped to Byrd and struck him across the ear with the long barreled pistol. Byrd fell down. Jasper Lorrington smiled at the fallen man.

"I dislike references to my physical appearance, Mr. Byrd," Lorrington said softly. "I trust you will now remember that? As for your people, as you call them, you do not think that we have our headquarters, or the, what do you call it, 'loot,' at my Glenlivcoe factory? No, if they come here, they will find much innocent wool and no more."

Byrd stood up, shaking his head. There was an ugly cut over his ear that bled. Byrd took out a handkerchief and pressed it against the cut as he glared at Lorrington. The fat man continued to smile and the swarthy chauffeur watched Jeff Byrd as if he would be very happy to strike the CIA man

again. Cranston was studying the chauffeur. There was something familiar about the small, dark man.

"I admit that the ticket was quite a shock to us," Lorrington purred. "A very careless error. Still, one must expect those things in a large organization. Luckily, we take considerable precaution. I would punish the man who so foolishly dropped that ticket, but I fear nearly everyone on my payroll was at that match. I went myself. You might think it unwise for criminals to attend such normal pursuits, but even criminals must have their diversion if they are to remain content, eh?"

"What do you intend to do now, Lorrington?" Cranston said.

"That rather depends on you, my dear Cranston," Lorrington purred. "After all, you are not a policeman like Mr. Byrd there. As a matter of fact I am not sure what your role in all this is. That was the reason for my visit to you, plus, of course, the fact that you had seen me following you. I thought it wise to lull any suspicions by revealing my interest in you."

"Very clever," Cranston said.

"I thought so at the time," Lorrington purred. "Still, I was afraid you would cause trouble. You seem to have many friends. Weston, of course, and that Allard person. Just what is that Kent Allard to you, Cranston?"

"A friend. I back his expeditions sometimes," Cranston said.

Lorrington looked thoughtful, his pudgy fingers pressed together before his face as if praying.

"A most resourceful man," Lorrington said. "There are not many men who can stop an amok attack."

"Kent has been in the jungles a long time," Cranston said.

"Apparently," Lorrington said. "A more direct method of removing him would have been better, but I can't be everywhere, can I? My man out there in New Guinea chose the wrong method, it seems. Now my men can't find this Allard at all. He appears to have vanished. Your friends have a penchant for vanishing, don't they Cranston? There was a rather comic-opera type in a black cloak, is he a friend of yours?"

"I don't have comic-opera friends," Cranston said.

"No, of course not," Lorrington said. "Still, there is something most irregular about you, eh? I never swallowed that business foolishness for a moment. Businessmen rarely become quite so involved with murders in foreign countries, or have Interpol men calling on them secretly."

Jeff Byrd suddenly brightened as he sneered at Lorrington. The CIA man laughed aloud.

"Interpol, of course!" Byrd cried. "You've forgotten about Nenni! He won't stop here in Glenlivcoe when he finds only wool!"

Lorrington suddenly roared with laughter. Tears streamed down the fat man's face. Even the swarthy chauffeur, whose face was somehow familiar to Cranston, began to smile. Lorrington wiped his eyes as he gasped for breath.

"Do not worry about Nenni, Mr. Byrd," Lorrington gasped through his laughter.

The swarthy chauffeur was grinning at Jeff Byrd. Lorrington still roared with laughter. The other members of the gang all looked at Byrd or Lorrington and broke into grins. For a split second, no one was watching Cranston. It was all the time Lamont Cranston needed. With his fantastic muscular control and amazing speed, Cranston leaped. He was upon the tall Scot who held the British Army revolver. Before the man was aware of what had happened, Cranston had the pistol in his own hand. This had taken only the smallest fraction of a second. As he whirled with the pistol in his own hand, no one had moved an inch.

"Byrd!" Cranston cried.

The other Scots seemed to be moving in terribly slow motion. They would not have a chance to stop Cranston. Lorrington was still laughing—it had all happened so fast. Only the swarthy chauffeur seemed to be capable of such a quick reaction. His long barreled pistol swung toward Cranston. But the swarthy man would be too late. Already Cranston's stolen pistol was aimed at the chauffeur's head. But Cranston never fired. Jeff Byrd, alerted by Cranston's cry, was wrestling the pistol from the hand of another of Lorrington's men. Just as Cranston tightened his finger on the trigger of the pistol aimed at the chauffeur, Byrd pulled the pistol away from Lorrington's hand and staggered back full against Cranston. Byrd fell over Cranston's feet, and Cranston's shot went wild into the grey and raining sky.

In the next moment a heavy blow struck Cranston on the head. It was a blow that would have felled, perhaps killed, an ordinary man. But Cranston only staggered under the impact. It was enough. Before he could again raise the stolen pistol, three men were upon him forcing him to the ground. Another heavy blow struck him, and the grey day faded into a sudden blackness.

17

LAMONT CRANSTON seemed to be floating in mid air. Bumpy air that tossed him around like a cork on a stormy sea. There was a distant roaring sound. Cranston opened his eyes. There was a throbbing pain in his head. He concentrated with the power of his mind trained in the Orient. The pain vanished at once. He reached to touch his head, but his hands would not move. He looked around. Behind him there was a square space of light, of grey and moving sky. He still bumped and bounced where he lay. In the next moment he knew where he was.

He lay on the floorboards of a moving truck. He was bound hand and foot. The truck was driving fast over a very poor road, and bounced and lurched agonizingly every second. Through the open rear of the lurching truck Cranston could see the grey sky and the passing hills, treeless and barren in the rain. His keen ears heard the sound of a heavy sea breaking against rocks off to the left of the truck. He tested the ropes that bound him. They were tight and expertly tied, but not tight or expert enough to prevent the escape of The Shadow. Cranston smiled to himself, and sat up against the side of the jolting truck. Behind him, toward the front of the truck, the tall, pipe-smoking Scot sat watching him. The guard held a small, thick submachine gun of obvious Soviet manufacture. But this, too, would not stop The Shadow. Only one thing stopped his escape now. It would not save Margo if he escaped before he found where she was being held.

A sudden groan beside him made him look away from the guard toward the far side of the fast-moving truck. Jeff Byrd lay there trussed like a turkey ready for the oven. The CIA man had opened his eyes, and now struggled to a sitting position facing Cranston. Byrd shook his head to clear it, and smiled ruefully at Cranston.

"Well, we botched that one," Byrd said. "My fault, Cranston."

"Never mind, Byrd," Cranston said.

"Never mind? Damn it, Cranston, Lorrington's right, no one will follow us now," Byrd said angrily. "That was our only chance."

"Perhaps," Cranston said.

Byrd looked at the guard, who was half dozing at the front of the truck, and then at Cranston. The CIA man spoke now in a whisper.

"Do you have help coming? That Allard guy, Lorrington talked about? Or maybe that guy in black I heard him mention? Who is that one in black?"

"I don't know," Cranston lied. The Shadow could not be revealed even to Byrd.

They were coming to a stop. Through the open end of the truck he could see high, rocky hills that seemed to drop off into nowhere. They were at the edge of the sea. The truck stopped. The guard with the submachine gun waved the weapon to indicate that they were to lie still. Two men appeared at the tailgate. One of them held another submachine gun and remained below on the ground. The other climbed into the truck and untied their hands and feet. He jumped back down, and the guard in the truck waved his machine gun again.

"Out," this guard said.

Cranston and Byrd climbed awkwardly over the tailgate of the truck and dropped to the ground. Cranston looked quickly around. The only sign of life anywhere was far off at the point where the sky seemed to meet the low hills. There, Cranston thought he could see, there were tiny shelters like watching posts, and tall uprights with thin strands that could have been barbed wire.

"Move," the same guard said.

The three guards herded Cranston and Byrd straight toward the edge of the land. Byrd was shivering in the cold. When they reached the point at which the land seemed to end, they were standing high on a rocky cliff above the pounding sea below. As far as Cranston could see there was nothing but cliffs, and grey sky with thick mist blowing across it, and the angry and ponderous black sea that reached unbroken by land all the way to America. There was nothing else in sight. The guards prodded them on. They saw a small trail that seemed to plunge down the very face of the cliff. Cranston went first, the shivering Jeff Byrd behind him. They went down and down along the narrow and treacherous trail on the cliff face. Until, suddenly, Cranston rounded an outcropping of rock and saw before him a deep, narrow bay.

The bay was hidden from the cliff above, was shut in by other cliffs on either side. It was open to the sea through a narrow cut—but that cut appeared blocked by high rocks. A large freighter was anchored in the small bay. And Cranston realized that the high rocks at the entrance were artificial to block the view of any passing ship on the sea. To the casual observer, the small bay would be completely hidden.

Around the large freighter small boats came and went to and from the rocky shore. The freighter itself lay deep in the water, all but fully loaded. On the shore there were four large square buildings without windows. There were two other smaller buildings, quonset huts, with windows at either end. A third small building was just in front of them built into the face of the cliff. Looking down, Cranston saw that, from the air, the buildings would all look like natural rock formations. The cove, and its buildings, were perfectly camouflaged. When there was no ship in the cove, it would appear like any other empty cove from land, sea, or air. And yet it was wide enough for two ships to ride at close anchor, and it was obviously deep enough to take the largest freighter. A perfect headquarters for a gang of international hijackers.

"Inside!" the guard behind Cranston hissed.

Cranston saw that next to the small building that clung to the face of the cliff there was an iron door. The door was unlocked. Cranston opened the door, and he and Byrd were pushed inside. He saw a long flight of stone steps leading downward. The steps seemed to fade into a dim distance. The guards forced them down and down until, making a sharp right turn, Cranston saw that they were in a long, bright corridor. The guard with the submachine gun continued to prod him ahead. They came to another turn, and another, in the maze of long, rocky corridors, until Cranston suddenly realized that he was alone with the guard. The second guard and Jeff Byrd had disappeared. Far off he heard the dull clank of a metal door closing. Lorrington had decided to separate them. The fat man was no fool. Before Cranston had time to think any more about Jasper Lorrington, the silent guard opened a steel door and pushed Cranston into a small, dark room. The door clanged shut behind him.

Cranston stood in a total darkness. There was neither window nor light in the small room. He walked slowly around the walls to ascertain the size of the room. It was no more than four feet by four feet—a box with walls of solid stone. The steel door fitted so tightly not a crack of light

showed. There was no bed in the room, no furniture of any kind. There was no drain and no ventilators. Air was entering from somewhere, but as hard as he looked with the eyes of The Shadow that could see in the dark, he could not see any break in the solid stone walls.

Lamont Cranston sat now in the dark tomblike room. He had no concept of how long he had been in the dungeon. There was no sound anywhere. He strained the keen ears of The Shadow, but he heard nothing. For the tenth time he stood and walked slowly around the silent room of stone. For the tenth time he found nothing but smooth, unbroken stone walls and the steel door without a flaw in its smooth, cold surface. He sat down again and tried to think of how he could, somehow, escape and reach Margo. He wondered what they were doing to Byrd, or where Byrd was. But he really knew. Byrd was in another room just like this searching the smooth walls for some possible escape. He sat against the wall and began to talk to himself, slowly and calmly, considering what he could do to help Margo.

Now Lamont Cranston tried not to think of Margo. It did no good. No one had come, no one had moved anywhere. No food had been brought. How long had it been since he had eaten? An hour, a day, a week? He could not tell. He lay on the cold stone. He thought he had dozed off, but he could not be sure. Once he had seen The Shadow, but that must have been a dream. *He* was The Shadow. He was sure of that. He knew he was The Shadow. And yet he also knew that only The Shadow held help him now.

The sound was deafening. Cranston sat hunched against the stone wall, his hands over his ears to shut out the roaring sound. The roaring of water. Steady, ceaseless, it had begun so long ago. At first he had thought it was only a small dripping sound far off and heard only by his keen ears. Then, slowly, it grew to the roar of a torrent, the maddening pounding of some great drum inside his head. There was no escape from it. Once he had stood up to run around the stone room and find the water. He had been sure that it was flowing into and through the room and would drown him here in this dark tomb. But the room had been dry and silent. There was no torrent, no drip of water. The sound had become, for a moment, again no more than a far-off dripping of some small drops of water. He had returned to

his seat on the floor against the wall. And the sound returned closer, louder and louder and louder and louder and louder and . . .

The light was like the cut of a razor across his eyes. He cringed. Where he sat on the floor against the wall the figure in the open doorway was hazy, indistinct, glowing with the light behind it. Cranston blinked, huddled where he sat.

The guard smiled at the figure crouched on the floor of the small, tomblike room. The guard had seen men in this room before. When they came out of this room they were broken men, so the guard smiled when he saw Cranston sitting there like some small, cringing animal. The guard had no way of knowing that he was not dealing with a man like other men.

After the instant of slashing light, the momentary haziness after so long in this lightless room, Cranston's vision cleared. He saw the guard clearly. The roaring torrent of water became no more than what it was, a trickle somewhere in the distance. His mind was alert again. The power of The Shadow flowed back through him, and in those few seconds he became himself again. But he did not show any of this. He remained huddled against the stone wall, blinking, cringing.

"All right, up!" the guard snapped.

Cranston did not move. The guard laughed.

"You ain't much," the guard sneered. "The boss took it easy on you. Get up, come on."

The guard kicked Cranston. The socialite heard by the sound of the voice of this guard that the man was no Scot. An American by the sound of the voice, underlining the far-flung nature of Jasper Lorrington's criminal operation.

"Up!" the guard snarled.

Cranston stood shakily. Still blinking, rubbing his eyes, and cringing as if all the fight had gone out of him, he was marched down the corridor. The guard marched him by a different route this time through the maze of tunnels. Cranston's hooded eyes studied everything as they passed. The tunnels were old. Probably the hiding place of ancient smugglers. The steel doors and lights were new—the work of the new gang of criminals. The guard marched Cranston down many corridors and Cranston saw no other human face. At last the guard pushed him through a door. He heard the sound of the surf breaking on rocks. Jasper Lorrington looked up and smiled as Cranston was marched in.

The fat man was sitting at his ease in an elegant living room. The room was luxuriantly furnished, and an enormous

picture window covered the entire front wall with a magnificent view of the stormy sea through it. He was, Cranston realized, in the small building that perched on the cliff above the hidden cove and the other buildings below. It was obviously the home and headquarters of Jasper Lorrington. Through an open door to the left, Cranston could see an office with a small safe against the wall. Lorrington was not alone. The fat man was having a drink with his swarthy chauffeur and—Margo Lane!

"Join us, Cranston," Lorrington purred.

Cranston stood there in the room as if not quite sure where he was. The guard leaned insolently against the door behind him. Cranston blinked at Margo.

"Lamont!" the beautiful woman said.

Cranston blinked. "You're . . . all right . . . Margo," he faltered.

"Better than you, Cranston," the swarthy chauffeur sneered.

Jasper Lorrington smiled. "Come, come, my dear Cranston, you were in my little hotel barely twenty-four hours. Surely that couldn't bother a man like you."

"Twenty-four hours?" Cranston faltered. "Is that all?"

Lorrington waved him to a chair. Cranston walked slowly as if in a trance. He sat bolt upright in the chair. Lorrington studied him carefully.

"So, perhaps we can have a talk now, eh? I thought the presence of Miss Lane might be a help. Surely you know by now that you cannot harm me? No one will find you here. Now the choice is up to you—join us, or simply vanish from the face of the earth."

"You swine," Cranston said hoarsely.

Lorrington waved his hand airily. "The room? A necessary bit of, how do you Americans say, 'softening up?' I had to show you how useless it is to fight me. I assume you know what our little operation is?"

"I know," Cranston said.

"It's really a beautifully simple affair," Lorrington said with satisfaction in his smooth voice. "Practically no chance of discovering us here, that ticket was simple carelessness that will not be repeated, I assure you. A few crates here, a few crates there, and all small and local. We have four ships cruising to pick up the crates and bring them here. Once here we can sell them or hold them indefinitely. The market is always there, especially behind the Iron Curtain. Drugs are in high demand, the profits are enormous, I assure you."

"Why? You're a rich man," Cranston said.

"No one can have too much money, my dear Cranston, I'm sure you know that," Lorrington said. And the fat man's face suddenly darkened. "And all that valuable merchandise being *given* away! For years I watched us giving it away to spineless weaklings and filthy savages. We fought our way up out of the muck, and now our precious governments are draining our life blood with their giveaways! Nothing should be given away, Cranston, no one gives us anything. Let those failures and savages work for their medicine! If they cannot survive without giveaways, let them die."

During the diatribe of the fat man, Cranston's hooded eyes were studying the room. The only doors in sight were the interior door he had been brought through, and the connecting door into the office where the safe stood. Outside, through the giant picture window, there was a wide ledge above the sea. Cranston estimated that the drop to the sea below was some sixty feet. As he studied the home of Jasper Lorrington, Cranston saw that the swarthy chauffeur was watching him with a thin, wolfish grin. Lorrington had stopped, and saw the chauffeur and Cranston watching each other. Lorrington waved his fat hand toward the chauffeur.

"Now Dominic there, he is a man who understands true values," Lorrington said.

"You bet I do," the chauffeur said.

Cranston stared at the chauffeur. "Dominic?"

"Ah," Lorrington said, "I wondered if you would recognize our Dominic. Of course, a man as talented as Dominic Fabrizzi is my associate, not my chauffeur. But the deception is useful, eh?"

Now Cranston knew where he had seen the swarthy little man. Dominic Fabrizzi, better known as Little Dum Dum Fabrizzi—gunman, rum-runner in the old days, rackets boss, and merciless killer. How many years ago was it, ten or fifteen, that Dum Dum Fabrizzi had been convicted of the murder of seven people, including two children, and sentenced to death? But Fabrizzi had won a new trial on a technicality, and by then the witnesses had died or vanished, and Little Dum Dum went free to be, finally, deported.

"I thought we had gotten rid of Dum Dum," Cranston said.

The swarthy Fabrizzi swore. "I don't like that there name, Cranston. Yeh, you got rid of me, a raw deal, see? I'm an American, they can't kick me around like that. I got money now, I'll get back in the country! Yeh!"

"Your trained animal, Lorrington?" Cranston said.

"Why you . . ." Fabrizzi began.

"Tut, Cranston, everyone is useful, we all have our roles. What I need is a bigger organization. That is why I want you to join me. I know how good a businessman you are, and your connections to Weston would be invaluable to us. Our information is not yet of the best. Think of it, Cranston, millions of tax-free dollars, perhaps billions! How can you refuse? I have you. Join me and be intelligent and rich."

"Is that how you got Paulson to join you?" Cranston said.

Lorrington laughed. "Paulson? That fool? He was not with us, Cranston. That money you found was simply a ruse, planted by one of my most clever men. A red-herring, shall we say? No, Paulson was an eager fool. He found that ticket and brought it to London himself instead of reporting it to Washington or Interpol. The idiot was ridiculously easy to trap. I'll grant you that he showed some intelligence in where he hid it. He gave us a great deal of trouble looking for that ridiculous ticket."

"Including the necessity for poisoning Snatcher Martin?" Cranston said.

"The little punk could identify me," Fabrizzi said.

Lorrington waved an angry hand. "Enough of such unimportant details. What does it matter that we had to kill a few men? The question is, are you coming in with us?"

"What about Jeff Byrd?" Cranston said.

"Byrd? Byrd? Forget about Byrd, he doesn't come into this!"

"Everyone comes into this, Lorrington," Cranston said.

The fat man stared at Cranston with his pig eyes. His mouth was open. Now he nodded and shut his mouth like a steel trap closing. Lorrington stood up.

"So," Lorrington said, "I was afraid of that. A pity, you are a bleeding heart like all your kind. Well, perhaps it is just as well, I'm not sure I could have really trusted you anyway. Alas, you are far too dangerous to us to be let go. My regrets, but I fear we must employ our disposal unit."

"Disposal unit?" Cranston said.

Lorrington waved his arm toward the picture window and the sea beneath the cliff outside. Cranston looked to where Lorrington pointed. Margo looked also. The beautiful woman covered her mouth with her hand as she looked, but the scream escaped her and echoed through the luxurious room.

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AT THE EDGE of the wide ledge above the sea three men were standing now. Cranston looked at them as Margo turned away. Two of the men carried submachine guns. The third man was bareheaded. His hands were manacled behind him. His feet were tied together. On his legs there were two heavy iron weights. The man was Luigi Nenni, the Interpol agent.

The small Italian Interpol man stood with his lips tight together in his swarthy face that was pale now out there in the cold wind. But his eyes were bright and fiery. He did not look at the men who stood beside him. The men who stood with Nenni were looking toward the picture window. Inside the warm, elegant room of the house on the cliff, Fabrizzi watched the scene outside and licked his thin lips. Lorrington showed no emotion of any kind. The fat man was watching Cranston.

"You can't, Lorrington," Cranston said.

"I must, my dear Cranston. He knows far too much, and when we saw that he was in touch with you we had to take him with Miss Lane. What is one Interpol man, eh?"

The fat man suddenly reached down to the small table near where he had been sitting. Lorrington pressed a button that was hidden beneath the table. There was a distant buzzing sound. Outside at the edge of the cliff the two guards took hold of Luigi Nenni. The small Interpol man spat in the face of one of the guards. They pushed him over the edge of the cliff and turned away.

The low, short scream seemed to reach into the luxurious room of Lorrington's house as if from another world. Then there was silence. Cranston stood there. As Cranston he had been powerless to save Nenni while the guard stood behind him with his gun ready. Margo turned away, her face pale and drawn. Lorrington looked at Cranston.

"One more time, Cranston," Lorrington hissed. "Work with us."

"No!"

"Very well, you leave me no choice."

Lorrington leaned down and pressed the buzzer again. The

two guards entered the room from the office. They had handcuffs and ropes. Quickly they handcuffed Cranston, tied his feet securely, and stood back. Cranston looked at Lorrington.

"Margo?" Cranston said.

Fabrizzi laughed. "Don't worry about the woman, I like her. I've got plans for her."

"You..." Margo began.

"Lorrington, you can't let that animal touch Margo!" Cranston said.

"We all have our weaknesses, Cranston. What does it matter, she will die soon anyway. We are wasting time now!"

Lorrington motioned to the two guards. They took hold of Cranston by the arms and dragged him out of the elegant room, through the adjoining office, and out through a door from the office to the wide ledge. At the edge they stood him up and quickly attached a weight to each leg. He looked down. The drop was some sixty feet straight down to the water. Directly beneath where he stood the sea was open and deep, the cliff undercut. But on either side the sharp, massive rocks jutted solid out of the sea. Lorrington had obviously picked this spot for his executions so that the victims would sink out of sight without a trace rather than smash to their deaths on the rocks. There was no trace below of Luigi Nenni. Cranston turned and looked toward the picture window. He smiled to Margo who stood inside the window. The buzzer signal sounded harsh and clear in the cold winter air. Cranston looked up at the grey and misty sky. The sea stretched black as far as he could see outward. As hands gripped him his brain began to concentrate. He gave no resistance as he was pushed over the edge.

The weights pulled him down through the misty air. With his powerful muscular control he forced his body perpendicular in the air. In the next instant he struck the icy water feet first and vanished from sight. Beneath the surface of the dark sea Cranston began three actions at once. Before he had even struck the water he had begun his secret shallow breathing learned from the great Chen T'a Tze himself. His hands were out of the handcuffs before he had gone more than two feet beneath the waves, and he doubled over to work free of the weights and the ropes on his legs. But perhaps the most dangerous enemy was the cold sea itself. No ordinary man could live long in such cold. But Cranston was no ordinary man, and his mind concentrated powerfully on raising his body temperature to battle the outside cold. All this was a

matter of minutes. Then he was free and swimming beneath the surface.

He was free and swimming away—but that was not enough.

Margo and Byrd were still in the hands of the organization. They could be killed at any moment, sent down into the black sea without the powers of The Shadow to save them. For Margo there could be worse than death in a cold sea. If he were to help them, he did not have an instant to waste. And yet from where he was now, swimming beneath the open sea beyond the hidden cove, he must have time. There was only one way that he could hope to stop Lorrington and Fabrizzini from killing Margo and Jeff Byrd—keep them too busy with himself to think about the death of two lesser threats to their safety. Make them pursue him. There was a risk in that until The Shadow could enter the grim contest, but it was a risk Cranston knew he must take. In the dark depths of the turbulent northern sea Cranston turned and swam for the surface.

He broke through the waves into the grey and misty air. He was far out, he could not come too close to the treacherous rocks as the ponderous sea smashed against and over them. To his left as he faced the high cliffs was the hidden entrance to the cove. To his right there was a jutting point of land reached by a path along the base of the cliff. He swam slowly in toward the cliff and the ledge before the small house above. They had to see him. If no one saw him, sure of his death in the dark water, then he might be too late to save Byrd and Margo. But fortune was with him this time. There was a loud, angry shout from above. An incredulous shout. It rolled out across the water. Cranston looked up and saw Fabrizzini standing there at the very edge. As he watched, the two guards who had bound and weighted him appeared high on the cliff beside Fabrizzini. The swarthy killer was screaming at the two guards. As Cranston watched from far below in the water, Fabrizzini knocked one guard down. The second guard raised his submachine gun and fired at Cranston's head bobbing among the high waves. But there was no chance of hitting Cranston with that weapon at that distance. As if hearing Cranston's thoughts, the great bulk of Lorrington suddenly appeared on the cliff and brushed away the submachine gun. The fat man neither shouted nor moved. Lorrington just stood there looking down as if he were suddenly aware that Cranston was far more than he seemed in order to have escaped and to be swimming in the cold, wild sea. Fabrizzini

appeared again holding a rifle. This was a more dangerous weapon, and Cranston began to swim. When he looked back Fabrizzi and Lorrington were both gone. Only the single incredulous guard still stood in the misty grey light on the high ledge.

Cranston stopped and trod water. His eyes strained to catch some glimpse of Lorrington or Fabrizzi. Then he saw them. They were far down the cliff at the base of the path running toward the hidden cove. A boat would be the next weapon used against him. Cranston turned again and swam with powerful strokes toward the jutting headline away from the hidden harbor. The sea was rough and heavy even for Cranston. He still had a long swim when he heard the sound of a motor far off behind him. The boat was a motor lifeboat of the type designed for just such a heavy sea. A man stood high in the bow of the boat with a rifle in his hands. Cranston swam toward the shore and the treacherous rocks. In the open, away from the coast, the boat would run him down easily. But close to shore the rocks would be far more dangerous to the boat than to a swimmer.

He swam in among the giant black rocks that jutted ominously from the violent white water. Other rocks lurked far more dangerous beneath the frothing surface of the angry surf. With his strange Oriental powers, the mysterious knowledge of The Shadow that enabled him to swim alive in such a cold and violent sea, he picked his way skillfully and surely among the rocks and surf where no other man could have lived an instant. Just beyond the first line of rocks the motor lifeboat circled in frustration, the man at its helm afraid to approach closer to the rocks. In its bow the man with the rifle strained to see through the grey day. He was looking for Cranston's head, for a clear shot, but the water was too violent, and Cranston found shelter behind the giant rocks where even the turbulence was less. He picked his way from rock to rock in the angry surf. He moved steadily toward the jutting headland's tip while the boat cruised beyond the rocks, impotent to do anything.

A bullet slammed into the rock just behind Cranston!

The sound of the shot came next—from the path that went along the length of the jutting headland. The sound of the shot coming after the bullet because the strong wind blew from the sea directly toward the headland behind Cranston. He turned to look at the path.

Jasper Lorrington himself was running along the path, his fat

bouncing obscenely. Behind him Fabrizzi held the rifle and fired again at the bobbing head of Cranston.

The shot struck the water in front of Cranston.

Now there was danger. This close to shore Fabrizzi might hit him sooner or later. He knew that the swarthy killer was a crack shot. If he devoted too much attention to evasion, even his great skills and control might not prevent him being dashed in some instant against the black rocks in the surf. And beyond the line of rocks where he would be safe from the rifle of Fabrizzi, the motor launch still cruised and waited for its chance. He could not stay where he was. Even now a third shot rang out from the path, and the bullet sang dangerously from a rock just above his bobbing head. He could not go to shore to attack Lorrington and Fabrizzi, he would be seen all the way, his movements necessarily hampered by the wild surf. His only way out was the open water where the launch waited. He would have to attack the launch single-handed. Carefully, he began to swim out toward the open water beyond the line of rocks.

Almost the instant his head emerged from the line of white water that marked the beginning of the rocks, the man with the rifle in the bow of the motor launch saw him. The man raised his rifle. Cranston sank from sight. He swam beneath the surface. When he came up again the boat was still there, closer to him now, and the man with the rifle was ready. Cranston went down again. Now the danger was growing. Even he could not live in the cold northern water indefinitely. Even he could not swim in such a raging sea forever. Already he could feel his strength weakening, the cold of the icy water forcing its way through his defenses. As if to show him how great his danger was becoming, he nearly struck hard against a rock submerged beneath the surface much farther out than the main line of rocks. He surfaced. The motor launch was close in front of him. Then, in an instant, he saw that the man standing in the bow with the rifle obscured the forward view of the man at the helm of the open lifeboat.

The rock he had almost struck was just under the surface behind him, invisible except for the violent moiling of the water above it as the waves tolled over it. Ordinarily any good sailor would have seen it, the hidden rock far out where it should not be, but in the launch the man with the rifle was excited as the launch plunged down on the bobbing head of Cranston. The men behind him were excited and drenched with the blinding spray. The helmsman was, for this instant,

blocked from view. Cranston did not dive as the rifleman in the bow of the launch raised his gun again. Instead, Cranston swam slowly backward, passed close by the hidden rock, and remained in full view. The rifleman's face opened in a silent laugh of triumph as he aimed and his finger tightened on the trigger. There was now no more than fifteen yards between the rifleman and the bobbing head of Lamont Cranston. The rifleman aimed. But the shot never came. In that brief, yet endless moment, the laugh on the face of the rifleman changed to a sudden howl of terror. He saw the great jagged rock beneath the surface with the plunging bow of the open motor lifeboat hanging for a second suspended high above the rock. Then the boat plunged down on the wave and struck the rock with all the force of the maddened sea. The rifleman went pitching over the bow, his arms flailing, the rifle flying away, his long scream blown away on the wind. The launch hung on the rock for a long minute. Then the waves hurled it free, its bow torn open like the gaping hole of a beast with its throat torn out. It went over on its side, rolled, and sank in seconds.

In the wild, icy water the men from the launch screamed and thrashed. Cranston watched them. He could have done little even if he had wanted to aid them, and he did not want to aid them. They were men of evil, and evil is its own eventual death. For these men death came quickly. Within a few moments, the wild sea rolled empty before Cranston's eyes. His pursuers sank into the cold depths without a trace. The hard, chilling laugh of The Shadow rose faintly above the roar of the surf and blew away on the wind. Cranston turned and swam toward the headland that was close now. On the shore Fabrizio and Lorrington were still running along the path. As Cranston swam around the headland, the two master criminals reached the farthest point of land and stood there staring out as the sea swept Cranston around them far out of range.

As he passed the jutting point, Cranston saw that the land fell away again on the far side, and that not far ahead the cliffs disappeared and a small, rocky beach touched the sea. A current flowed strongly around the point, sweeping him in toward the land. He allowed the current to carry him, even his trained muscles tired now. Behind him Lorrington and Fabrizio had not given up. The two criminals were struggling along this side of the headland toward the small, stony beach. They were not men who gave up easily, or quailed in the face of danger, but they would not reach the beach until long

after the current had swept Cranston to the spot. When he was abreast of the beach, Cranston swam with his last power toward the shore. His feet touched. Battling the pounding surf he emerged at last from the sea onto the safety of the stony beach. Lorrington and Fabrizzi were still struggling along the rock headland.

For a long minute Cranston stood there on the beach in full view of his pursuers. Fabrizzi saw him. The shout of the swarthy killer carried faint on the wind across the distance. Far off Cranston saw Fabrizzi raise his rifle. The Avenger turned and vanished from their sight behind the boulders. A trail led from the beach up to the barren moorland. Cranston climbed swiftly to a point halfway up the trail. Then he stopped and peered over a rock toward his pursuers. They had stopped the pursuit and were now talking to each other, their arms waving angrily in the distance. Cranston watched them until they turned and walked back toward the hidden cove. They were walking very fast. Cranston remained there on the trail for another few moments. When he moved again to continue along the trail up to the moors, it was not Cranston but The Shadow who now glided upward in the grey and windy day, his black cloak streaming out in the wind.

The guard in the sheltered hut at the edge of the high barbed wire fence stood alert in the doorway of the hut. Only moments before his telephone had jangled, and he had been warned to watch for the man Cranston who had, somehow, escaped. The guard could not understand how the man had escaped, and his angry boss had not told him. The guard had never known a man to escape once he had been taken to the cove. So now he watched, but he was nervous.

He neither saw nor heard the black figure that suddenly loomed up before him. The great, black, batlike thing seemed to rise up from the earth itself to stand before him. The guard staggered back. A mocking voice spoke.

"Put down that weapon!"

The guard saw two burning eyes fixed on his face from beneath a wide slouch hat. He saw a hawk nose and the fiery eyes and a glowing red ring on a long, thin finger. He saw nothing else but a swirling shape of black blown in the wind.

The guard had no memory of being marched down from the knoll and into the hut. He did not know that he had sat there in a chair in the hut while The Shadow had used the telephone. The Shadow had chosen this hut because the wires

from it showed that it had an outside telephone line. It was the nearest hut to the gate, hence the telephone. He used the telephone to call London, to tell Stanley to get Monk and the police to this place as fast as a jet could get them here. A jet and a police helicopter would bring them swiftly. The Shadow did not call the police of Glenlivcoe, he could not know whether the Glenlivcoe police were really police or in the pay of Jasper Lorrington. So he called Stanley and London, and as swiftly as they would get here in this modern age, it might not be quick enough. The lives of Margo and Jeff Byrd might not last long enough for the police to save them.

Leaving the guard still seated in the warm hut, The Shadow glided out into the grey day. A thick fog was rolling in from the sea. The Shadow turned away from the high barbed wire and faded into the thickening fog back toward the hidden cove itself. Already the baying of hounds rose on the slackening wind. The hounds were on the trail of Lamont Cranston, men with guns following closely behind the straining dogs. But it was not Lamont Cranston who now moved swift and silent toward them. On the desolate and barren moor they would do battle with The Shadow.

19

THE HOURS passed in the fog and night moved closer. Across the moorland the men of the organization hunted. And The Shadow hunted them.

Near the barbed wire gate three dogs howled alone in the fog. Their masters lay in a deep gulley where they had fallen as sharp, unseen blows struck their necks from out of the fog. Two men lay in the gulley, dead, with only one submachine gun beside them.

In the center of the deserted wasteland another man of the evil organization lay behind a boulder. The shot that had killed him had come unseen from the swirling clouds of fog.

Far away at the distant other end of the barbed wire fence a guard who had been waiting alert in his watch hut saw only a great black shape move toward him. He, too, was dead before he could raise his weapon. The shots that killed this

guard reverberated across the moor and brought three other men racing through the fog.

These three vanished into another deep gulley, smashed below on the rocks. They had tripped over a thin, invisible wire that had, somehow, been stretched across their running path.

Just before nightfall, near the top of the path that led down the cliff face to the hidden cove below, four more dogs strained at their leashes, their noses down, their mouths wide and slavering. Behind them came two men with their submachine guns. They all moved like wraiths through the grey and rolling fog. The dogs strained on past a deep gulley without pausing. The two men did not even glance into this gulley. They trusted in their dogs, and it was a mistake. The Shadow came out of the gulley just as the men passed. The blows that struck them down were unseen and unknown. They died without knowing how, and The Shadow shed no tears for these venal men who made such men as Lorrington and Fabrizzi possible by doing their evil work for no more than a few pieces of silver. The Avenger turned to move down the path that led to the hidden cove. The dogs bayed on in the fog and growing darkness, unaware of The Shadow who moved across the land without trail or scent.

The Shadow glided down the cliff face in swift silence. His shape was like a trick of the fading day in the fog. A black shape without outline as it moved down the path. As he approached the house of Jasper Lorrington halfway down the cliff, he saw another guard standing on the wide ledge before the house. The ledge itself seemed to have no end, the cliff invisible in the fog. There was light in Lorrington's office. As The Shadow watched, two more guards came out of Lorrington's office. They were carrying boxes—file storage boxes—as if Lorrington had decided to move his records suddenly. The two men with the boxes went on down the path toward the cove below. The Shadow moved silently out of the fog and felled the guard who had been looking after his fellows. The Shadow stepped over the fallen guard and looked into Lorrington's lighted office. The office was all but stripped, only the safe and two more file boxes remaining. With his keen vision, The Shadow looked after the two men who had gone down the path. His eyes pierced the fog and saw that the two men had entered a boat and were going out to the freighter in the cove. Lorrington and Fabrizzi were leaving on the ship, obviously taking no chances in case Cranston actually escaped. The Shadow hurried on down the cliff—Lorrington would not have

left Margo and Jeff Byrd behind, they would be ideal hostages.

At the cove side men worked rapidly loading crates into barges. The crates bore the labels of the Peace Corps, CARE, U.S. Government, the Red Cross, and many other organizations that send aid all over the world. The barges, loaded, were moving out to the ship. Empty barges were coming back. The work was moving smoothly but with great haste. The busy workmen, sweating under lights of the dock even in the winter cold of Scotland, did not notice the cloaked figure of The Shadow as he moved past them to the edge of the cove. Once again this day The Shadow slid into the water. He entered without sound, removed his slouch hat, wrapped the specially water-proofed cloak about him, and submerged without a ripple on the surface of the sheltered water of the cove. The Shadow disappeared and the barges moved steadily back and forth across the cove unaware of the Avenger swimming far below the slick surface illuminated by the powerful lights on dock and ship.

On the ship, the guards patrolling the deck while other men loaded the crates into the ship never saw the black figure rise up from the water like some ancient sea monster. He came out of the cove at the bow and went up the anchor chain like a wraith in the fog. A single guard in the bow turned too late with his submachine gun. The Shadow left the guard where he had fallen, and moved like a ghost along the foggy deck. He surprised and silenced two more guards. He could have continued on through the ship disposing of guards, but there were many of them, and already the last crate on the shore had been loaded into the last barge. There was no time to waste, the ship could weigh anchor at any moment. And there was still perhaps two hours before the police could possibly arrive. The Shadow plunged below into the bowels of the ship.

The Shadow stood in a narrow companionway. To his left, through a heavy steel watertight door were the holds of the freighter. But to the right he saw a series of cabin doors, unusual for a freighter, and The Avenger realized that this ship was specially built. It was a floating headquarters and stronghold for Jasper Lorrington and his gang. Somewhere in this part of the ship The Shadow would find Jasper Lorrington and Fabrizzi. He began his grim search. The cabins he looked into were all large and luxurious, the proceeds of the worldwide syndicate were enormous—at the expense of their fellow men. The last cabin at the end of the long corridor

had a peculiar-looking lock. The Shadow studied the lock. With the ultimate power of The Shadow in his mysterious guise of cloak and black hat and glowing fire-opal girasol, he knew at once that it was an electronic lock operated by a small force transducer instead of a key. And it was fitted with an alarm should anyone attempt to force the door. The lock was impregnable—to anyone but The Shadow. With his cold, and chilling smile on his lips, The Shadow concentrated his powers on the lock. The force of his mind released the lock, short-circuiting the alarm. The door swung silently open at his touch.

Jasper Lorrington was bent over his desk in the opulent cabin. The fat master criminal was surrounded by the file boxes taken from his shore office. The Shadow glided into the room. The only light in the room was a small desk lamp on the desk where Lorrington sat working. The fat man was talking harshly into a set of flat speaker microphones inlaid into the top of the desk.

"Post 14, report! Post 14! Damn them, what's happening," Lorrington muttered in amazed anger. "Post 37, come in! Yes, have you seen him? You fools, can't you find one man? Post 12, 14, 17, 3, and 8 do not answer. Investigate! Where are the men with the dogs, you idiots! He can't escape you! You hear me!"

With an oath, Lorrington swept his hand over all the switches and the room became silent. In the cabin Jasper Lorrington wiped the sweat from his face and forehead, though the room was not hot. The Shadow laughed. The chilling laugh flowed through the cabin. Lorrington jerked alert.

"You cannot catch Cranston now," The Shadow mocked. "You are finished, Jasper Lorrington! Your evil is over."

Lorrington leaped to his feet. The fat man moved with amazing speed for one of his bulk. A silver-headed cane was in his hand. A cane that became, suddenly, a sword. It was the same cane The Shadow had seen in the alley behind The Blue Admiral. Lorrington peered into the dimness of his cabin. The Shadow stepped out of the darkness.

"You!" Lorrington hissed. "This time . . ."

"No, Jasper Lorrington!" The Shadow intoned in his chilling voice. "This time you will not escape me. You are powerless before The Shadow!"

Lorrington blinked. "The Shadow? I . . . I have heard of you. So you are behind all this! Now I see, Cranston works for you!"

"I have many agents, many who help destroy all evil,"

The Shadow mocked. "Where are Margo Lane and Jeff Byrd! You will tell me, you cannot resist!"

The fiery, burning eyes of The Shadow gleamed steadily toward the fat man. Lorrington blinked again, brushed his hand across his eyes. The fat man was fighting the cloud rolling into his mind. Lorrington seemed to sway where he stood behind his desk. His fat hands rested on the desk. Suddenly, with a last effort, Lorrington slid his hand across the desk to a small button. He pressed the button. Instantly a cloud of choking, thick smoke filled the room directly in front of the desk. The Shadow could no longer see Lorrington. The smoke screen was completely opaque, choking, hiding the entire front part of the room. The Shadow, for a long moment, could see nothing through the sudden smoke. Then his powerful eyes and mind burned through the smoke, dispersed it like a puff of wind. He stepped again toward Lorrington.

Jasper Lorrington was no longer there.

The desk was no longer there.

The Shadow raced forward. There was a gaping hole where Lorrington and the desk had been. The Shadow looked down into the hole. The desk was there a deck below—but Lorrington was gone. A trap door escape, and Lorrington had used it with his last effort before The Shadow completely clouded his mind. The Shadow stared down. Behind him there was a light, deadly step. He whirled, his black robes flying in the dim light.

"The comic-opera monster," Dominic Fabrizzi said. "This time I get you."

Fabrizzi stood there in the cabin just inside a secret door in the wall. The mechanism of the trap door had undoubtedly also set off an alarm in the next cabin where Fabrizzi had been. Now the small, swarthy killer raised his long-barreled pistol. There was no time for The Shadow to cloud his mind. The shot would come first. The Shadow did not hesitate a second. He leaped like a great bat into the hole of the trap door. He landed on the deck below and was gone from sight with the speed of light.

A pistol and a hand appeared for the fraction of a second. The man holding the pistol leaped around the corner, his pistol ready to kill whoever was there. The Shadow was upon him. The Shadow's hand flashed down in its killing stroke. In the instant that his hand was descending for its death blow, The Shadow saw that the man was Jeff Byrd! With a supreme effort of muscular control The Shadow lessened the force of his blow and Byrd fell unconscious but uninjured. The Shadow quickly picked up the CIA man's

pistol and dragged Byrd into the nearest storeroom. There in the dim light he looked down at the unconscious Byrd. Somehow, Byrd had escaped. Probably while Lorrington and Fabrizio were out after The Shadow. With Byrd's help he could find Margo more quickly, but not as The Shadow. An instant later The Shadow was no longer in the storeroom, Lamont Cranston had taken his place.

Cranston bent down and revived Jeff Byrd with the secret techniques of The Shadow. The CIA man sat up, shaking his head, feeling his neck where the blow had struck. Byrd looked around as if not sure what had struck him. Then he saw Cranston. Byrd struggled to his feet.

"Cranston! How did you get . . ."

"I escaped, the guards did a bad job on my bonds," Cranston said, "but never mind about that now. How did you escape? Where is Margo?"

"You did that, my escape I mean. They were so busy chasing you they forgot about me. They got careless and left no guard on my cell. I managed to break out of the cabin they put me in here on the ship. You did that, too. They became so damned scared of you being loose that they transferred us out here to the ship. In those cells on land no one could have escaped. But out here it was easy to pick the lock when there was no guard." The CIA man stopped in his explanation. He looked at Cranston. "How come you came back, Cranston. It was mighty risky. I figured you'd go for the police."

"I came back for you and Margo," Cranston said. "Where is she?"

"Maybe you should have gone for the police. The ship is leaving soon," Byrd said. "Have you got my pistol? I took it from a guard."

Cranston handed Byrd his pistol, and said, "I did call the police, they should be here any moment. But we must find Margo!"

Byrd held his pistol. "The police are coming?"

"Yes."

"None too soon, damn it. I . . ."

Cranston whirled. He had heard the man behind him. Byrd, too, had heard the man.

Dominic Fabrizio leaped into the room, his silenced pistol pointing straight at them. There was a wolfish grin on the face of the swarthy little killer. An animal-like snarl escaped Fabrizio's lips as he leveled his pistol straight at Lamont Cranston. The shot rang out, and then a second and third.

But Cranston was untouched. It was not Fabrizzi who shot, but Jeff Byrd. Fabrizzi went down, slammed against the steel bulkhead by Byrd's first shot. The second shot struck Fabrizzi in the forehead as he was pitching forward from the bulkhead. The third shot entered the back of Fabrizzi's neck as he lay on the deck. Cranston rushed to the fallen killer. He looked up at Byrd.

"Dead," Cranston said.

"He had us dead to rights," Byrd said.

"He would have known where Margo was!"

"I know where she is, come on!" Byrd cried.

Byrd ran from the storeroom. Cranston raced after the CIA man. They went down corridors and around corners like madmen. Cranston could hear voices on the deck, and the sound of Lorrington's voice screaming orders. The shots that had killed Fabrizzi had been heard all through the ship. As they raced across one cross corridor, a sailor fired at them with his submachine gun. Byrd dropped the man with a single quick shot, and they ran on. Cranston brought down the next guard who had suddenly appeared in their path. They jumped over him and went on until Byrd finally stopped in front of a cabin door. Cranston saw that they were in the corridor of the cabin section near the stern where Lorrington's office was at the far end of the corridor. Byrd wasted no time. The CIA man shot the lock off the door of the cabin three doors along the corridor from Lorrington's private cabin. Cranston jumped into the cabin with the lock shot off. Margo lay bound on a bunk.

"Margo!" Cranston cried.

The beautiful woman's eyes flashed. "I'm all right, Lamont."

Byrd stood guard at the door. "Hurry, Cranston!"

Cranston swiftly untied his dark-haired secretary and helper. Margo stood up shakily, rubbing the circulation back into her arms and legs. At the door Jeff Byrd was waving his pistol.

"They'll be down here like hornets in a . . ." Byrd stopped.

The CIA man listened. Cranston and Margo listened. The whole ship had begun to throb. Deep in the ship the engines were turning over. Cranston heard the distant rattle of the anchor chain. Then, slowly, the ship was moving. Jeff Byrd had become as pale as death.

"Hurry!" Byrd cried.

The CIA man ran from the small cabin and turned left in the corridor toward the open door of Jasper Lorrington's private cabin. Cranston and Margo ran after him. Byrd raced into the

private office. The gaping hole of the trap door was still open in the floor. But the private cabin was empty. Jeff Byrd went to the wide stern windows of the fat man's elegant private cabin. A smile broke out on his face. Cranston looked out the window beside Byrd. There, just below, was a barge. An empty barge floating abandoned in the haste of the freighter's sudden departure.

"We couldn't live long in that cold water," Byrd said. "But if we hurry . . ."

"They'd see us, Byrd, and blast us from the water. This ship has to have some guns mounted," Cranston said.

"It does," Byrd said, "but they won't use them. Break out those windows, quick!"

Byrd turned from the windows and ran across the large cabin to a small wall cabinet. Cranston broke out the stern windows, clearing the jagged edges of thick glass. Byrd opened the cabinet. As Margo and Cranston watched, the CIA man pulled a handle set inside the cabinet. Byrd then took his pistol and smashed off the handle. The CIA man ran back to the stern windows.

"Out, quick! Into the water and swim for the barge!" Byrd cried.

The CIA man did not wait an instant. He went out the stern windows in a high, awkward dive. Margo jumped next. Cranston stood for a second in the room looking back at the wall cabinet where Byrd had pulled the lever. Then Cranston dived out in a graceful, arching dive. In the water they swam for the barge. Cranston did not feel the cold, but Margo was struggling in the icy blackness. The searchlights on the dock were still as bright as day. Cranston swam to the beautiful woman and carried her through the icy water to the barge. Jeff Byrd, shivering and pale, helped them up onto the barge. The CIA man did not waste an instant on words, but raced to the barge motor and started it up. Just as the barge gathered way, and Byrd turned it toward shore, his pistol out and ready to battle the men who lined the dock staring out at the moving freighter, there was a wild, furious shout from the freighter itself. Cranston looked back. Jasper Lorrington stood high on the open deck of the stern.

"Kill them! Kill them!" Lorrington was screaming toward the men on the shore.

Jeff Byrd, at the tiller of the barge, stared back with a thin smile on his handsome face. Cranston, too, watched the fat man. He waited. He had a strong certainty that he knew what the lever was that Jeff Byrd had pulled in the private cabin.

"Kill them!" Lorrington screamed. "Cranston and the woman! Kill them! Kill Byrd, you hear me! Kill Byrd! Kill..."

That was the last word Jasper Lorrington ever heard, his own voice shouting to kill. The fat man stood there, his men around him, on the open deck at the stern above his own private cabin. One instant he was there and screaming, the next instant he vanished in a sheet of flame, a monstrous roar of sound.

The whole freighter blew up in the dark and foggy night. A sheet of exploding flame engulfed the stern first. Then the center of the ship exploded. The whole ship heaved up out of the dark water of the hidden cove in a mighty convulsion. Flame shot into the sky lighting the dark cove as bright as day. The ship split in half, twisted and shuddered, as more explosion wracked its tortured steel. Men screamed and fell burning into the water of the cove. Jasper Lorrington had vanished in the first terrible explosion that had destroyed the entire stern. The freighter fell back into the water, a burning mass, the flames lighting the whole cove and the cliffs above. Then it shuddered and rolled over onto its side, slowly beginning to vanish beneath the waves.

On the barge Cranston hung on. The barge heaved and plunged in the force of the explosions. Hot steel and flaming debris showered down onto the barge. Jeff Byrd crouched beneath the shelter of the wheelhouse. Cranston lay on the deck on top of Margo, shielding her. Then the worst was over, the ship on its side, the flames hissing and boiling out in the dark water. On shore the men of Jasper Lorrington looked at the dying ship, and silently turned and ran away into the dark, scattering across the bleak and barren moors and cliffs. Jeff Byrd stood with a smile and watched Lorrington's men melting away into the night.

"That should end it," Byrd said. "They'll scatter like flies now with Lorrington and Fabrizzini gone."

Cranston was looking toward the sinking freighter. Byrd saw the direction of Cranston's gaze. The CIA man nodded.

"An old rum-runner's precaution," Byrd said. "It must have been Fabrizzini's idea. Bombs planted to destroy evidence in case of capture. I figured the first charge would be under Lorrington's cabin, destroy the records."

"A wise precaution," Cranston said. "Clever, but, as it turned out, too clever. It destroyed them all."

"All of them," Byrd said.

The CIA man and Cranston stood with Margo watching as the freighter shuddered once more and sank beneath the

black surface of the cove. Nothing moved now in or around the deserted cove except the single barge moving slowly toward shore where the bright lights still illuminated the empty dock and squat grey buildings of the destroyed hijacking organization.

20

IN THE WAREHOUSE beside the cove, grey and dismal in the growing dawn, Inspector Monk looked at the crates still stored there in silent rows. Superintendent Jones whistled softly as he estimated the value of the crates that had not been destroyed. June Allyn stood with Jeff Byrd, a certain triumph mixed with sadness on her beautiful face framed by the long blonde hair. High above on the grey moorland just emerging from the darkness into the weak light of dawn, whistles blew faintly as the Scottish police brought by Monk from Glasgow rounded up the remnants of the gang. Cranston and Margo stood apart, watching.

"A king's ransom," Superintendent Jones said as he looked at the crates.

"Or a million lives that will be saved," Cranston said.

"Yes," Jones said.

"Poor George," June Allyn said. "Did they have to kill him?"

"Yes," Cranston said. "He found that ticket. They had to stop him. Still, in the end it was George Paulson who destroyed them, really."

"I suppose it was," June Allyn said. "His mother will be glad for that, at least. Now we can take him home."

"If only he hadn't worked on his own," Jeff Byrd said.

"Yes," Cranston said. "Did you find Lorrington, Inspector?"

Monk nodded. "His body was in the cove. I fished him out myself, he was dead."

"He said nothing at all?" Cranston said.

"How could he," Monk said. "I told you he was dead when we found him floating. Fabrizzi, too, only he'd been shot good."

"Byrd got him," Cranston said.

Monk nodded again. "Well, I have to get to work. I'm

going up on the moor to see if I can help round up the rest. We've got the gang in Glenlivcoe and some in London. I suppose we'll never get them all."

"Probably not," Cranston said.

Monk left to walk up the cliff path to the moorland above. Jones disappeared among the crates, still looking at them and counting them. Jeff Byrd looked at his watch.

"I'll have to call in my report, they'll be waiting. At least I can tell them George wasn't a traitor," Byrd said.

The CIA man went up the cliff path toward Lorrington's house where there was an outside telephone. Margo and Cranston remained in the warehouse. After a time June Allyn excused herself, she was cold, she was going back to the cars up on the road above.

"There's nothing more I can do here," the blonde girl said. "I just wanted to be here to see why George died."

"Of course," Margo said.

With the blonde girl gone, the warehouse became silent in the thin dawn. Margo looked at the grim grey scene for some time before she realized that she was now alone in the warehouse. Cranston had also vanished.

In the office of the dead Jasper Lorrington's cliff house, a figure bent low over the small safe. The office had been stripped bare, except for the safe and one small file box. The safe was no longer against the wall, as if it had been about to be carried away when those carrying it had gone to do something more urgent. Now the half-hidden figure, indistinct in the grey dawn light, worked in silence over the safe. The figure breathed heavily, working with great speed, urgently.

The chilling voice of The Shadow filled the grey silence.

"A last attempt," The Shadow mocked. "You could not resist the money. Or is it records you are after?"

The figure at the safe whirled. A heavy pistol was in the person's hand. The half-hidden figure was Jeff Byrd.

"Who is it! Where are you?!" the CIA man cried out.

"I am here, Jeff Byrd," The Shadow said. "I am The Shadow, and I come to destroy you."

The Shadow suddenly moved through the dim grey light. Byrd whirled too late to face the Avenger who had emerged from a totally unexpected spot in the shadowy room. The Shadow's hand descended on Byrd's wrist, and the heavy pistol flew out of the CIA man's hand. The Shadow swept it up and out of the open door of the office on the cliff. The Shadow laughed.

"I come to avenge the murder-of George Paulson," The Shadow said.

"Paulson? Who killed Paulson? It was Lorrington and he's dead!" the CIA man cried.

"No, Jeff Byrd, Jasper Lorrington did not kill Paulson," The Shadow said sternly. "You killed George Paulson!"

"Me? Me? I worked with George! I'm a CIA man! Who do you think you . . ."

Byrd still stood near the safe. The safe was open now, and stacks of money were visible inside. There was also a small, black notebook. It was the notebook that Jeff Byrd now clutched in his shaking hands. He stood and faced the great black figure of The Shadow. He stared at the burning eyes that watched him from beneath the slouch hat.

"You must be insane!" Jeff Byrd cried.

The Shadow's voice was cold and deadly when he spoke again.

"I have the proof, Jeff Byrd," The Shadow said. "Lorrington could not have had time to trap you and Lamont Cranston unless he had been warned by someone who knew you were coming. No one knew but yourself and Cranston."

"Someone made a mistake. Lorrington's men were watching us when we found the ticket! I was attacked. I . . . You, that was you!"

"Yes, Byrd," The Shadow mocked, "it was I who attacked you in the funeral home. No one knew about that soccer ticket except Cranston and yourself. And yet Jasper Lorrington mentioned the ticket! How did Lorrington know what Paulson had found? You and Cranston did not know until you found it, no one but Paulson himself knew what he had found until you and Cranston found it on his body!"

"Lies, all lies!" Byrd shouted. "Lorrington captured me too! They hit me! They tied me up in that truck!"

"No, Byrd, when Cranston almost escaped, *you stopped him!* You pretended to fall, but it was deliberate to help your friends Lorrington and Fabrizzini. Then you were bound to get Cranston's confidence, to ask about who might come to help, to ask about me!"

Byrd's eyes were small and narrow now. The CIA man watched the dim and looming figure of The Shadow.

"You're guessing now, whoever you are," Byrd said. "You can't prove any of this!"

The Shadow's laugh echoed through the grey room high on the cliff. The cloaked Avenger moved closer to Byrd, his eyes beginning to blaze fiercely at the CIA man. Byrd did

not flinch. The Shadow's voice was cold and hard and deadly when he spoke again, his words driving into the tall, muscular CIA man.

"Earlier, Jeff Byrd, you called the supposed robbery killer a 'little punk.' Only the gang knew that Snatcher Martin was a small man. You wanted Cranston to believe it was Snatcher who had killed Paulson, but you made a mistake and called him a 'little punk,' and only someone who had been in the alley that night would have known that Snatcher was there and was 'little.'

"You were a member of the gang, the needed 'contact' on the inside. We all knew that there had to be someone on the inside of various governments to furnish the gang with the information they needed about the shipped crates. You warned Lorrington about the ticket being found, and Cranston coming after him. No one else knew.

"On the ship you made your biggest mistake. You had not escaped from Lorrington and Fabrizzi, you were never in a cell! When I knocked you out, you were looking for me! You were out after me just as Fabrizzi was. But when you saw Cranston, you were alarmed. You would have killed Cranston, but he told you that the police were coming. You knew the game was up, so you killed Fabrizzi instead. You made very sure that you killed Fabrizzi instead of capturing him. He would have told Cranston about you being a member of the gang.

"Then came the biggest error. You knew just where Margo Lane was, and you knew the location of that bomb lever! You knew exactly where the bomb lever was, you went straight to it! But supposedly you had never been on that ship before, you had been locked in a cell on land and then in a cabin! In your fear that Lorrington would give you away, or catch you for the killing of Fabrizzi, you panicked and forgot that you should not have known where that bomb device lever was. You knew the game was up, and you wanted to destroy all evidence of your membership in the gang! That was why Lorrington was shouting to his men to kill you!"

All the time The Shadow was speaking in his hard, cold, merciless voice, Jeff Byrd had not moved a muscle in his tall body. The CIA man just stood there and listened, but the color had drained completely from his face. When The Shadow reached the part about the bomb lever, Byrd began to stare at the black shape that loomed before him. The tall CIA man's eyes were uneasy, frightened now, but there was a

peculiar shrewdness in them at the same time as he watched The Shadow.

"You know a lot about what I did recently, don't you?" Byrd said.

"The Shadow knows all, Jeff Byrd," the cloaked Avenger said.

Byrd shook his head. "No, not all, and no one knew *all* those things except Lamont Cranston. You work with Cranston! You, and Margo, and that Stanley, and probably that Kent Allard guy! Sure, I get it now, you're a gang! You just want to muscle in, take over! You've got Commissioner Weston on your payroll too! Of course, what a setup!"

Even The Shadow's voice was disgusted. "Are you so evil you can understand only evil, Jeff Byrd! You have sold out your country and your friends for a few tainted dollars, and now your warped mind can conceive only evil."

Byrd laughed. "Come off it! Why do you go around hiding in that outfit, afraid to show your face? All right, I was in with Lorrington, why not? All the years I've risked my life for good old Uncle Sam and been paid peanuts! And all the time Sucker Uncle Sam was giving away millions! I just decided to get my share, why not? Lorrington's dead, but I'm not! We'll go on together, I know the whole operation! We'll start it again, bigger and better, and no mistakes this time!"

"There will be no next time for you, Jeff Byrd," The Shadow said, his voice chilling in the dim dawn office on the cliff.

"You murdered George Paulson," The Shadow said. "You alone killed a man who called you friend, and for that you will pay. The weed of crime bears bitter fruit, Jeff Byrd!"

"You can't prove I was even near George," Byrd taunted, but the eyes of the tall, muscular CIA man were looking around now, searching the dim dawn office.

"George Paulson was a trained policeman," The Shadow said slowly, carefully "He was a good policeman. You yourself said that *you* were his only real contact. He should have called you the instant he landed in London—and *he did!* There was no one else he could have called now that we know he was not part of the gang. He could have called Interpol, but Nenni gave his life to fight evil, and if Paulson had called Nenni, Paulson would be alive today. Instead he called you, his friend and only real contact in London.

"You found out he had evidence against your organization, but he did not tell you just what it was. You had to get it, so you arranged the meeting in the alley behind The Blue

Admiral. There had to be a good reason for him to be in that area, he did not know London. Someone told him to go there, and that person was you! You met him and killed him. But you made the mistake of not first getting the evidence. Then Snatcher Martin came out of the pub and scared you off. Later you went back and planted the thousand pounds to throw suspicion onto Paulson. And you sent Fabrizzi to find out if Snatcher Martin had found the evidence."

Byrd sneered. "And just how do you come to this remarkable conclusion?"

The Shadow's voice was low, deadly. "I said that George Paulson was a trained policeman, a good policeman. He was found dead in a strange city, in a dark alley, shot by a gun pressed against his body—and his own gun was still in its holster under two layers of clothing with the safety still on!!" And The Shadow's eyes glowed and burned as he looked at Jeff Byrd there in the grey dawn room with the thick mist rolling in from the sea outside the open door. "No trained policeman would ever go alone into a dark alley with his coats buttoned and belted, his gun still in its holster, and walk up so close to his killer unless that killer was a man he had known and trusted completely!"

There was a long silence in the dim office. Jeff Byrd stood frozen. The Shadow's eyes glowed and burned. Above on the moor the police whistles were closer through the mist. The sound of the sea seemed to fill the whole sky above the hidden cove. Jeff Byrd suddenly snarled like a savage beast.

"You can't prove any of that!"

"That book you hold will prove you were a member of the gang," The Shadow said, "and once a jury knows that, they will hang you for the murder of George Paulson!"

Jeff Byrd suddenly swore a violent oath. "All right, I killed him, the stupid fool! Now I will kill you!"

From nowhere a small deadly pistol appeared in the renegade CIA man's hand. It was a .25 caliber automatic, very small, and The Shadow realized that Byrd kept it hidden in his sleeve on a special spring that released it instantly into his hand when Byrd needed it. That was how Byrd had gotten so close to Paulson without the dead man seeing the pistol. Now Byrd pointed the evil little gun straight at The Shadow. The traitorous agent stepped two steps toward The Shadow. The eyes of The Shadow became points of cold fire. The fire-opal girasol blazed with power. Byrd's finger tightened on the trigger of the tiny automatic. The Shadow transfixed the renegade with his merciless gaze. Byrd squeezed the trig-

ger—but nothing happened. The fingers of the traitor would not move. Byrd squeezed again, strained, his face muscles bulging with effort. The Shadow's eyes bored into the tall, powerful turncoat. The tiny pistol began to lower. Byrd stepped back, shaking. He raised his free hand to his eyes as if to brush away the thick mist rolling all across the barren land beyond the door of the grey office. The black book dropped to the floor. The tiny pistol dropped with its sound muffled by the rolling mist. Byrd staggered. The Shadow stepped to the renegade agent. But Byrd, like the dead Jasper Lorrington, was a man of courage if of evil, and with one last effort the CIA man broke from The Shadow's gaze and ran for the door.

"Stop!" The Shadow commanded.

Crazily, lurching, Jeff Byrd half-ran and half-staggered out through the open door onto the wide ledge before the cliff house. In the open, shrouded by thick mist, Byrd hesitated, looked left and right, his half glazed eyes searching the mist.

"Stop! Return!" The Shadow cried, his voice cold and powerful.

All his muscles taut, Jeff Byrd gathered himself for one last effort to escape the mist over the land, and the mist that was surging through his mind on the will of The Shadow. The CIA man hurled himself forward, staggered, and with a loud, horrible scream of rage and agony went through the mist and over the unseen edge of the cliff. An instant later his hurtling body smashed below on the jagged rocks that jutted up from the fog-shrouded sea. In a final irony, the traitorous CIA man had fallen at the wrong place, striking the rocks instead of the open water.

The final death scream had barely faded from the misted land when Margo came running up the path out of the fog. She saw The Shadow seeming to float there at the unseen edge of the cliff. The beautiful woman looked down into the swirling grey.

"Who?" she said.

"Jeff Byrd, Margo," The Shadow said.

"How horrible!" the dark-haired woman said.

"Yes, but no more horrible than the murder of a trusting friend," The Shadow said. "Evil begets evil and dies of its own horror, Margo."

"I know," Margo said. "How could a man be like that? Betray all he was for nothing but money."

"Jeff Byrd said it himself, Margo," The Shadow said. "There are rotten apples in every good barrel. Rot that lives in the shadows of good, and dies by the same Shadows!"

And the chilling, mocking laugh of The Shadow rose high in triumph through the thick mist that shrouded the bleak and desolate land of wild moors and jagged cliffs.

Moments later the others came from all directions through the fog to see who had screamed in final terror. When they reached the cliff house, The Shadow had vanished, and Lamont Cranston was in the grey office gathering up the black book and the tiny automatic that would prove the renegade crime of Jeff Byrd. Evidence that would revenge the memory of the dead George Paulson, whose only mistake had been to trust a friend.

THE END

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